242.294
.M34
Mahoney, E.J.
The secular priesthood.

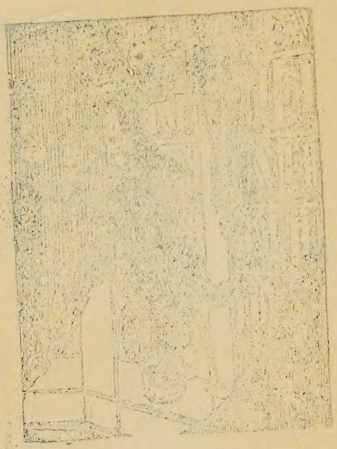
Date Due			

Cardinal Spellman Library
St. Pius X Seminary
Graymoor, Garrison, N. Y.

DEMCO

LIBRARY
t. Paul's Friary
RAYMOOR, GARRISON, N. Y.

EX LIBRIS



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2022 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

https://archive.org/details/secularpriesthoo0000reve

THE SECULAR PRIESTHOOD

THE SECULAR PRIESTHOOD

BY

Rev. E. J. MAHONEY, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF MORAL THEOLOGY, S. EDMUND'S COLLEGE

WITH A PREFACE BY

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL BOURNE

ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER

NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO, SAN FRANCISCO

BENZIGER BROTHERS

PRINTERS TO THE HOLY APOSTOLIC SEE

1930

M34

NIHIL OBSTAT:
THOMAS MCLAUGHLIN, S.T.D.,
Censor deputatus.

IMPRIMATUR:
EDM. CAN. SURMONT,
Vicarius generalis.

WESTMONASTERII
die 14*a Octobris*, 1929.

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

PREFACE

BY HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL BOURNE, ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER

DR. MAHONEY has rendered a really opportune and much-needed service to the Church in England and in the English-speaking countries by setting forth so clearly the true nature of the Priesthood, and of the obligations which the priestly vocation involves. It is a subject not sufficiently known nor adequately appreciated. The laity are naturally inclined to take it for granted. They know instinctively that the Priesthood is a holy state; they expect priests to be holy; they are disappointed and scandalised if the holiness which they expect to find in a priest should appear to be wanting. But they do not as a rule know in detail how a priest comes to be made, what is the training which has prepared him for ordination, nor the precise standard of life which has been kept before his eyes during the years of preparation. And this want of knowledge applies especially to the training of the secular, pastoral and diocesan clergy, who constitute the great majority of those who have received the Priesthood; who alone are absolutely essential to the life of the Church; and who all over the world have to carry the burden and heat of the day wherever there are none found to come to their aid and assistance.

This want of knowledge and appreciation is sometimes to be found among our priestly brethren of the regular

clergy. They know me well and how much I value their work and how greatly I esteem the various religious bodies to which they belong ; and they will not, I believe and trust, take amiss what I have to say on this point. But I have been startled sometimes to find how little they know of the training of the secular clergy. Want of knowledge inevitably leads to want of understanding and appreciation ; and, at times, to unjust comparison and depreciation. It is easy to see how this comes about and to excuse it. So many of them have been brought up in their own schools, and have passed thence in early manhood to a novitiate, and subsequently have been taught and trained by members of their own institute, meditating on its rule, and inspired by the writers which it has formed. They are rightly filled with love and admiration of the life and rule of their holy founder. But meanwhile they have had no time to become acquainted with the literature affecting the training of the secular Priesthood, nor with the history or actual carrying out of that training. Still less have many of them meditated upon the wonderful code of priestly life, more sacred and authoritative than the rule of any religious order, which the Church herself lays down in the counsels and warnings and admonitions contained in the Pontifical, and addressed by her Bishops to every candidate as in successive ordination he advances towards and ultimately receives the Priesthood. No one can consider this solemn teaching of the Church without realising that a call to the Priesthood is a call to a very holy state, carrying with it the obligation to a very holy life, and containing within it *all* the means needed to attain that holiness. Any depreciation of the Priesthood, whether by foolish comparison with other states of life or by throwing doubt on the obligation to perfection which priestly ordination must imply, does an injury both to individuals, and to the Church, which it is impossible to

calculate or exaggerate. Such depreciation on the part of a good man can clearly never be wilful. It must arise from want of thought or want of knowledge. The great value of this treatise is that it will render such want of knowledge less excusable than it has been, on the part of those who have not thought sufficiently about the Priesthood of Jesus Christ, as it exists, and has from its origin existed in the world, before and apart from any obligations not arising out of its own intrinsic nature.

FRANCIS CARDINAL BOURNE,
Archbishop of Westminster.

FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI,
May 30th, 1929.

St. Paul's Friary
GRAYMOOR, GARRISON, N. Y.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is to explain the nature and the obligations of the Priesthood. There exist many great classical works on this subject, written for the guidance of priests, and it is not the author's intention to add yet another. These chapters are addressed to candidates for the Priesthood who are of an age to understand the subjects discussed, to youths with the necessary qualifications for the priestly office who, for a variety of reasons, have not yet tested the reality of their vocation, and to parents and others who may be able to guide the aspirations of suitable candidates. Perhaps a clearer knowledge will help to dispel many doubts and hesitations. For two reasons the book deals chiefly with the Priesthood as exercised by the diocesan or secular clergy. In the first place, it is the only body of which the writer has any intimate knowledge, since for ten years he has had the privilege of assisting in their formation. Moreover, it is a body of men whose ideals and obligations are frequently misunderstood and misrepresented. In the last two chapters an attempt is made to explain the sanctity of their state, which entails a solemn obligation to attain and preserve a degree of personal holiness greater even than that required by the public profession of religious vows. These words are not meant as an exhortation to the Priesthood but are merely expository of its ideals and obligations. Though not written for the information, still less for the edification, of priests, there are doubtless many who will be glad of the texts

and references which establish the traditional doctrine of the Church. My grateful thanks are due to His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop for writing the Preface, and for his constant help and encouragement; also to the President and staff of S. Edmund's for their valuable assistance and counsel.

Feast of S. John Vianney,
August 9th, 1929.

CONTENTS

PREFACE BY HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL BOURNE, ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER . . . . . PAGE v

AUTHOR'S PREFACE ix

CHAPTER I

THE CHRISTIAN PRIESTHOOD

§ 1. Christ the Priest 1
§ 2. The Priesthood in the Church . . . 9

CHAPTER II

HOLY ORDERS

§ 1. The Priesthood Distinct from the Laity . 17
§ 2. The Hierarchy of Orders 23
§ 3. The Sacrament 29

CHAPTER III

THE PRIESTLY LIFE

§ 1. The Priestly Functions 38
§ 2. The Pastoral Care of Souls . . . 44
§ 3. Private Life of the Priest 50

CHAPTER IV

VOCATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD

§ 1. The Divine Vocation 55
§ 2. The Plan of Divine Providence . . . 64
§ 3. Freedom of Acceptance 71
§ 4. The Call of the Church 73

CHAPTER V

THE SIGNS OF VOCATION PAGE

§ 1. Right Intention 87
§ 2. Holiness of Life 90
§ 3. Mental and Physical Fitness . . . 94
§ 4. A Conviction of being Immediately Called by God is Unnecessary 97

CHAPTER VI

FOSTERING VOCATIONS

§ 1. Suggestion and Encouragement . . . 103
§ 2. Domestic Influences 108
§ 3. Late Vocations 114
§ 4. Prayer 119

CHAPTER VII

THE SEMINARY

§ 1. Importance 122
§ 2. The Rule and the Studies 127
§ 3. Spiritual Life 136

CHAPTER VIII

PRIESTLY PERFECTION

§ 1. Spiritual Perfection 146
§ 2. Obligation Arising from Holy Orders . . 151
§ 3. The Teaching of the Church . . . 158
§ 4. Theologians and Spiritual Writers . . 163

CHAPTER IX

THE SECULAR PRIESTHOOD

§ 1. It is Probably Not a Canonical State of Perfection 172
§ 2. The Vocation of the Secular Priest . . 185
§ 3. Some Misconceptions Concerning It . . 191

CHAPTER X

PAGE

THE RITE OF CONFERRING THE PRIESTHOOD . . 199

NOTES

A. Vocation to the Priesthood 220
B. The Priestly Obligation to Personal Sanctity . 223
C. Is the Priesthood a State of Perfection ? . 227
D. Some Novel Views Concerning Secular Clergy 233

ALPHABETICAL INDEX 241

THE SECULAR PRIESTHOOD

CHAPTER I

THE CHRISTIAN PRIESTHOOD

§ 1

'I DESIRE you to think of the bridge which God has built through his only Son, and to contemplate this peerless structure stretching from heaven to earth, the greatness of God united to an earthly human nature.'[1] The derivation of the word 'pontifex,' 'high-priest,' from the notion of bridge-building is probably a correct one, but the idea itself, as applied to the human nature of Christ Our Lord, is most accurate and of profound significance. 'For there is one God, and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a redemption for all.'[2] By assuming a human nature, the second person of the Blessed Trinity became the mediator between God and man, the bridge by which he reaches us and we reach him. The sacred humanity, assumed at the Incarnation, was something inferior to God: 'The Father is greater than I';[3] but it was superior to that of any other man by reason of the dignity of the

[1] *Dialogues of S. Catherine of Siena*, Part II, Ch. VI.
[2] 1 Tim. ii, 5.
[3] John xiv, 28.

divine Person in whom it subsisted, and by reason of the 'fulness of grace' with which it was endowed. Possessing fully and perfectly the nature of God and the nature of man, Christ could render to his Father an adequate satisfaction for the sins of men, and it was for the purpose of reconciling man to God that the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. This central dogma of the Christian faith implies many things. Christ is the appointed *king* of men, having the Gentiles for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession.[1] Offering himself on the altar of the Cross as an immaculate Victim, he completed the mysteries of man's redemption, all creation was made subject to his dominion, and he delivered into the hands of God's majesty an eternal all-embracing kingdom.[2] He is also our supreme *prophet* teaching the way of God in truth. 'God who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all, in these days, hath spoken to us by his Son.'[3] Unlike all previous teachers sent by God to reveal his ways to men, Christ Our Lord always saw the face of his Father, always contemplated eternal truth: 'We speak what we know and we testify what we have seen.'[4] He taught men also by his own example, telling us to follow after him and be perfect. He is the *model* for all men to imitate and copy in order to make their souls conformable to the image of God's Son.[5] He is the appointed *source of grace* which makes us sharers of the divine nature,[6] and the sacraments which he has instituted are as instruments in his hands and channels of divine life. He is the

[1] Ps. ii, 6 *seq.*
[2] Cf. Preface for the feast of Christ the King.
[3] Heb. i, 1.
[4] John iii, 11.
[5] Rom. viii, 29.
[6] 1 Peter i, 4.

head of one great mystical body of which all men are members, the vine of which all men are branches. All these offices of Christ are contained within the central notion of his mediatorship between God and men. They are so intimately connected and so related one to another that it is almost impossible to understand one without, at the same time, understanding the rest.

But Christ had one supreme office to perform during his life in this world, an office from which his sacred name was drawn: 'Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.'[1] As mediator between God and man, he was to offer himself to his Father as a sacrifice: 'Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith: Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast fitted to me: Holocausts for sin did not please thee. Then said I: Behold I come: in the head of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will, O God.'[2] It is of this *priestly sacrificial office* of Christ that we now have to speak in greater detail, since everything we shall have to say concerning the priesthood is traced to the sacerdotal functions of Christ, which he assumed with his human nature. He is the fount and origin of all priesthood, both in the Old Law and in the New. The sinless humanity assumed by the Son of God was taken from a race of men who had forfeited the divine friendship and who needed reconciliation with God. By offering himself to God in his manhood, an offering perfected and consummated on the Cross, our great High Priest offered to God a sacrifice of adoration, thanksgiving, impetration and expiation for sin.

This priesthood of Christ is a reality. It is not merely a metaphorical manner of speaking but a clear and definite

[1] Matt. i, 21.

[2] Heb. ix, 5; Ps. xxxix, 7.

concept, which has its roots deeply imbedded in the Holy Scriptures, in Catholic faith and in the dogma of Redemption itself. For the notion of ' sacrifice ' is inseparably connected with that of a ' priesthood.' There are other functions usually attributed to a priest, for he is the person lawfully constituted as the link between God and man. He prays to God on behalf of the people, he teaches them divine things, his life should be an example of holiness and virtue, he is the channel by which the divine favour is shown to the world. But his chief and special function is offering sacrifice.

Sacrifice is the natural expression of man's dependence on God. So deeply is this idea rooted in human nature that sacrifice has existed, in some form or another, in nearly every religion of which we have any knowledge. With the departure of many races from the knowledge of the one true God, the primitive idea of a sacrificing priest was mingled with every kind of superstition and magic. In spite of these accretions, the universality of sacrifice only serves to show that it is natural for man to worship God by offering gifts to him, in token of his being the sovereign lord of all things, and as an expiation for sin.

Accordingly, in the old dispensation, accustomed as the Jews were to a sacrificial worship of God, we find the future Redeemer foretold as a priest. In a psalm which Christ himself testifies as Messianic[1] his priestly character is portrayed : ' In the brightness of the saints : from the womb before the day-star I begot thee. The Lord hath sworn and he will not repent : Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech.'[2]

In no other book of the New Testament is the concept of a sacrificial priesthood so clearly and grandly portrayed as in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Its purpose was to

[1] Matt. xxii, 42.
[2] Ps. cix. Cf. Ps. xxxix, 7 ; Heb. x, 5.

instruct the Jewish converts, in whose minds the idea of a sacrificial worship was deeply ingrained, by reminding them that in Christ the priesthood reached its perfection and consummation, and infinitely surpassed that of the Old Law, ' an example and shadow of heavenly things.'[1] Unlike the priests of the Old Law, Christ is sinless.[2] The Jewish sacrifices were imperfect, but Christ ' by one oblation hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.'[3] The temple of the old religion was a perishable ' worldly ' structure,[4] but Christ ' is not entered into the Holies made with hands, the patterns of the true, but into heaven itself, that he may appear now in the presence of God for us[5] . . . he hath an everlasting priesthood, whereby he is also able to save for ever them that come to God by him : always living to make intercession for us.'[6] Between the old priesthood and the new there are certain points of resemblance which are inherent in the concept of a priest offering, as the representative of humanity, sacrifice and propitiation to God. Christ, like the priests of the Old Law, had a human nature,[7] tempted in all things,[8] compassionate with human weakness and infirmity ;[9] learning obedience by the things which he suffered.[10] He was chosen by God for the priestly office : ' Christ did not glorify himself that he might be made a high-priest : but he that said unto him : Thou art my Son ; this day I have begotten thee. As he saith also in another place : Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech.'[11]

Infinitely sublime and mysterious is the priestly

[1] Heb. viii, 5.
[2] *Ib.*, iv, 15.
[3] *Ib.*, x, 14.
[4] *Ib.*, ix, 1.
[5] *Ib.*, ix, 24.
[6] *Ib.*, vii, 24, 25.
[7] *Ib.*, v, 1.
[8] *Ib.*, iv, 15.
[9] *Ib.*, iv, 15 ; v, 2.
[10] *Ib.*, v, 8.
[11] *Ib.*, v, 5 and 6.

vocation of Christ. He is the brightness of the divine glory, upholding all things by the word of his power,[1] consubstantial with God the Father ; yet he is spoken of as being called to the priesthood by God. Doubtless, the first Jewish readers of the Epistle to the Hebrews, familiar with a high priesthood of primogeniture, would quickly see the fittingness of the Son of God being named a high priest.[2] But the priesthood of Christ, in the strict use of the word, belongs to him in his human nature only. By assuming human nature it was possible for the Son of God to offer to his Father, on our behalf, a sacrifice and satisfaction proportioned to our offence.

From the first moment of the Incarnation, by the very fact of the hypostatic union, Christ received the priestly unction, the supreme dignity and power belonging to a human nature united to a divine person, a power which rendered him capable of interceding for men and of offering to God a worthy sacrifice. Christ is not a priest by reason of his divine nature, but in virtue of his sacred humanity subsisting in a divine person. His priesthood is not only unique, ' it is the fount and origin of all priesthood, for the priest of the Old Law was a figure of Christ and the priest of the New Law acts in his person.'[3] He was ordained, ' anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows,'[4] consecrated the great High Priest of the New Dispensation, at the moment of the Incarnation. Being constituted a priest from the first moment of his earthly life, he is shown to us in the Gospels performing all the functions of a priesthood. He was a teacher by word and example. He forgave sins. He called down from heaven every kind of material and spiritual blessing on the people whom he represented. He prayed for them to God, ' with a strong cry and tears offering up prayers

[1] Heb., i, 3.
[2] Cornelius a Lapide *in loco*.
[3] *Summa Theol.*, III, 22, 4.
[4] Ps. xliv, 8.

and supplications,'[1] alone on the mountain,[2] in desert places,[3] during the whole night ' in the prayer of God '[4] before choosing his successors in the priesthood, and in a most solemn and impressive manner on the night before he suffered.[5]

But there remained the central function of his priesthood, the offering of a sacrifice to God. There is a sense in which all the actions of God made man could be called sacrificial, since one action alone of God incarnate would have sufficed to atone for the sins of the whole world. But, in his infinite love for men, he chose to make the supreme sacrifice of his own life ' a redemption for many.'[6] It was by his Passion and death on the Cross that Christ, in laying down his life, offered himself as the victim of his priestly sacrifice to God on behalf of men. It was a sacrifice which infinitely surpassed any other conceivable oblation whether of the past or of the future. It is superior to them all in the dignity of the priest and the victim, and from the fact that the four ends of sacrifice, adoration, thanksgiving, satisfaction and impetration, are accomplished by one act perfectly and completely. ' Christ being come an high-priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation : neither by the blood of goats or of calves, but by his own blood, entered once into the holies, having obtained eternal redemption. . . . And therefore he is the mediator of the New Testament, that by means of his death, for the redemption of those transgressions, which were under the former testament, they that are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance.'[7]

[1] Heb. v, 7.
[2] Matt. xiv, 23 ; Mark vi, 46.
[3] Mark i, 35.
[4] Luke vi, 12.
[5] John xvii, 5–26.
[6] Matt. xx, 28.
[7] Heb. ix, 11–15.

There is one other important aspect of the priesthood of Christ which needs to be understood. It is everlasting. 'The others indeed were made many priests, because by reason of death they were not suffered to continue: but this, for that he continueth for ever, hath an everlasting priesthood, whereby he is able also to save for ever them that come to God by him, always living to make intercession for us.'[1] 'Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech.'[2] S. John, seeing in vision the throne of God, describes in mysterious terms the 'lamb standing as it were slain . . . and they sung a new canticle saying: Thou art worthy, O Lord, to take the book and to open the seals thereof: because thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God, in thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests.'[3] In the canon of the Mass we pray God to carry the oblation 'by the hands of thy holy angel, to thy altar on high, in the sight of thy divine majesty.' What meaning are we to give to this mysterious altar of sacrifice in heaven on which Christ continues as a priest for all eternity? There can, of course, be no question of Christ really dying again: 'Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over him. For in that he died to sin, he dieth once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.'[4] If there is a sacrificial act renewed by Christ in heaven it can only be the continued offering of his risen and glorified body 'always living to make intercession for us.'[5] It may even be questioned whether there is any *active* exercise at all of the sacrificial function of Christ's eternal priesthood in heaven. 'By one oblation he hath

[1] Heb. vii, 23–25. [2] *Ib.*, v, 6.
[3] Apoc. v, 8–10. [4] Rom. vi, 9.
[5] Heb. vii, 25.

perfected for ever them that are sanctified.'[1] Christ's great sacrifice being once consummated there is no further necessity, on his part, to renew it. The presence of his sacred humanity in heaven, his 'appearing now in the presence of God for us,'[2] is abundantly sufficient for the continuance of his priesthood.[3] When time has run its course this everlasting priesthood will remain for all eternity, for the eternal glory of the saints is the end or purpose for which Christ assumed the priesthood, and the attainment of this end represents the eternal consummation of his sacrifice.[4]

§ 2

The number of the elect, however, is not yet brought to completion. We must leave the contemplation of eternity and return to this earth, in order to see how the one priesthood and the one sacrifice of Christ is continued amongst us till the end of time, applying to our souls the benefits of his Passion and death. It was for this purpose that Christ Our Lord, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Holy Eucharist. Our God and Lord was about to offer himself once, by means of his death, on the altar of the Cross unto God the Father, there to work our eternal redemption. Yet his priesthood was not to be extinguished by his death, for he had declared himself a priest for ever, according to the Order of Melchisedech. He wished to leave to his Church on earth a visible sacrifice, such as human nature requires, whereby that sacrifice, which was to be once accomplished on the

[1] Heb. x, 14. [2] *Ib.*, ix, 24.
[3] Cf. M. C. D'Arcy, S.J., *Christ as Priest and Redeemer*, pp. 27–34. *Treasury of the Faith* Series.
[4] *Summa Theol.*, III, q. 22, a. 5.

Cross, might be re-enacted and its memory maintained and its power applied to the sins of men even to the end of the world. He celebrated with his Apostles the Paschal Sacrifice in memory of their fathers' passage out of Egypt, and then instituted the New Passover to commemorate his own passage from this world to his Father, in which, by shedding his own blood, he redeemed us, delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into his Kingdom.[1] He offered up to God the Father his own body and blood under the species of bread and wine, which he gave to his Apostles to receive and eat. He made them priests of the New Testament, and laid upon them and their successors in the priesthood a solemn injunction: Do this in commemoration of me.[2] In the Holy Eucharist there is contained and immolated, in a bloodless manner, that same Christ who once offered himself, with the shedding of blood, on the altar of the Cross. The victim is one and the same. The Priest who offered himself on the Cross continues to offer himself through the ministry of those who share his priesthood. Only the manner of offering is different.

Thus does the Council of Trent[3] hand on to us the faith of the Church concerning the Holy Eucharist. It is one sacrifice with that of the Cross, the same altar, the same victim, the same priest. Should we examine more closely the method by which this unity is to be explained, various theories may be held and taught within the Church. It would take us beyond the limits of this book to explain them. Nor is it at all necessary to do so in order to understand the nature and office of the Christian Priesthood. As there is only one sacrifice for sin so there is only one priesthood. The priesthood of Christ was assumed by him, when he assumed our humanity for the

[1] Col. i, 13. [2] Luke xxii, 19.
[3] Session XXII, cap. 1 and 2.

redemption of the world. By priestly ordination, those men whom God has chosen share in this priesthood. Through no merits of their own, but solely because of their participation in the priestly character of Christ, they continue to mediate between God and man. By their ministry heavenly grace is granted through the Sacraments which Christ has instituted, but Christ is the principal minister. They forgive sins but only in his name. Through their recitation of the divine office they pray to God for men, but their prayer has value only because of its union with that praise offered to God by Christ on this earth.[1] They teach in his name and preach Christ crucified. Their priestly office requires them to show an example and model to the faithful, based on the example of Christ. But, above all, in standing daily at the altar, they exercise the chief priestly function of sacrifice, and that sacrifice is blessed, approved, ratified and accepted by God because it is the sacrifice of his most beloved Son, Jesus Christ Our Lord.[2]

The Priesthood of the New Law began its sacred functions at the Last Supper. The sacred rite of the Holy Eucharist was much more than a gift reminding men of their Saviour. It was an act of thanksgiving[3] and the offering of a victim whose blood is shed ' for many unto the remission of sins.'[4] It was, in a word, a sacrifice and its repetition was imposed upon those who sat at table with him : ' Do this for a commemoration of me.'[5] ' Sacrifice and priesthood are so united, by God's ordinance, that both have existed in every law. Since, therefore, in the New Testament, the Catholic Church received from Christ's institution the holy visible sacrifice of the Eucharist, it must also be confessed that there is in the

[1] *Aperi Domine*, prayer before reciting Office.
[2] Canon of the Mass.
[3] Luke xxii, 17.
[4] Matt. xxvi, 28.
[5] Luke xxii, 19.

Church a new, visible, external priesthood, into which the old has been translated.'[1]

From amongst those who followed him, and listened to his words, Christ had chosen some to be 'fishers of men.'[2] He had instructed them in matters which the people at large did not understand[3] and he had commissioned them to teach and rule in his name. 'You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.'[4] On these men alone was laid the injunction to continue doing what he at the Last Supper had done, in offering his Body and Blood; on these alone did he bestow, after his Resurrection, the power of forgiving sins.[5] The Apostles, who had received their priesthood from Christ, chose and constituted other men to continue 'ruling the Church of God'[6] and dispensing his mysteries.

Passing over, for the moment, the rite by which the priesthood of Christ is handed down in the Sacrament of Holy Orders, we have to examine a little more fully the nature of this mysterious participation in his priesthood, and to see what is the will of Christ regarding those who may possess it. For we must never forget that there is now only one sacrifice pleasing to God, and only one great high-priest who offers it. The sacrifice which Christ consummated on Calvary is continued in the Holy Eucharist, and it was to provide for its continuance that Christ, at the Last Supper, gave a share in his priesthood to the Apostles and through them to the Christian priesthood until the end of time. They share in his priesthood, offer his sacrifice and perform all the other priestly functions in his name. It is in this vicarious character of the priestly life that its whole value consists. If religion is to have any force in our lives, it must be a

[1] Trent, Session XXIII, cap. 1.
[2] Matt. iv, 19.
[3] Luke viii, 10.
[4] John xv, 16.
[5] John xx, 2.
[6] Acts xx, 28.

personal thing, not merely a system of philosophy, a theory, a set of principles. The personal relations which must enter into any religious inspiration worthy of the name are the relations between the soul and the person of Christ, not the relations of a soul towards this or that priest. It was the fear of an excessive esteem for his own person that made S. Paul say 'I thank God I baptised none of you.'[1] If there is one thing that every Catholic understands it is the 'impersonal' position of the priest. His own virtues and vices, his temperament and mannerisms, have a certain power in attracting or repelling the faithful in the performance of their religious duties; but in the essential exercise of his office, in offering Mass, in absolving from sin, in administering the sacraments, they do not regard one priest as having a greater value than another, but in every priest they see Christ Our Lord, the fount and origin of all priestly power. S. Paul laboured that Christ should be formed in the people whom he had converted. Every Christian is predestined to be made conformable to the image of God's Son,[2] and, as the soul grows in grace and holiness, so does it approximate more and more to this model. Some of the Saints have resembled him so closely that they bore about in their bodies the marks of Christ crucified; Christ was in them transforming their souls into the likeness of his own. But it is in a different manner and for a different purpose that Christ is present in the priest. The priesthood is not an endowment due to the personal merits of him who possesses it, but it is given to him solely because 'he is ordained for men in the things that pertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sin.'[3] Its possession is not for him a source of personal satisfaction and self-reliance, but rather of mistrust and

[1] 1 Cor. i, 14. [2] Rom. viii, 29.
[3] Heb. v, 1.

fear, for it may mean for him an increase of eternal remorse. It does not give him a title to the service of men but makes him rather the servant of them all.

In every rightly ordained priest there is something permanently and indelibly impressed upon his soul which marks him out as sharing in the priesthood of Christ. To use an imperfect analogy, it may be compared to the insignia of a judge who represents his sovereign, or to the sign carried by the personnel and effects of a military division. It is called the CHARACTER of the priesthood. The meaning of the Character, received in Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Order, became more clearly understood owing to the early controversies concerning those Sacraments which had been conferred or received by heretics and sinners. It was always the doctrine of the Church that they could not be repeated. A priest, for example, was always a priest, if he were properly ordained, even though ordained by an heretical bishop, and even though he fell later into apostasy. These sacraments could not be repeated because the recipient was set apart and consecrated for the service of God in a special manner, in much the same way as a Church or a chalice might be consecrated and set apart for divine worship. By Baptism the soul is incorporated into Christ's family, becomes a member of his body, and acquires the right to receive the other sacraments. By Confirmation the soul is marked and sealed as a soldier in his service. By the sacerdotal character an ordained person is configured to the priesthood of Christ, and is commissioned to continue amongst men the sacrifice which he offered and the unspeakable benefits of his mediation between God and man. Through Christ's sacerdotal dignity the priest continues Christ's work of mediation, offers Christ's sacrifice, forgives sins in Christ's name, and administers the other sacraments which Christ has instituted.

He can be regarded as endowed with a two-fold power, over the *real* and over the *mystical* body of Christ, and it is this intimate relation between his soul and Christ which constitutes the source of his privileges and of his obligations. The priestly power of offering in the Mass the sacrifice of Christ's *real* Body and Blood is the chief function of the sacerdotal office, and it is the source of all the other spiritual benefits he may confer upon the faithful, the members of Christ's *mystical* body. It is the priest's duty to prepare them for the worthy use of the sacred mysteries by teaching the doctrine of Christ, by forgiving sin which is an obstacle to the fruitful reception of the Bread of Life, and by perfecting their lives on the model of Christ.

Because of the sublimity of its functions, the priestly office was instituted by Christ Our Lord as a state of life altogether distinct from that of the rest of the faithful, and it carries with it an obligation to interior sanctity which is of greater binding force than the obligation arising from vows taken in a religious Order.[1] In everything concerning the possession of these privileges and obligations, we must free our minds from all preconceptions. Christ Our Lord who, in his sacred humanity, is the source and origin of all priestly mediation between God and man, has deigned to allow other men to share in his sacerdotal character. He is the sole arbiter in determining who shall be graced with such a privilege. He alone determines the manner in which it is to be conferred and perpetuated till the end of time. How shall we know the will of Christ? By the teaching of the Catholic Church, wherein he has promised to abide all days, even to the consummation of the world. Not only in the inspired writings of the New Testament, which the Church has preserved and safeguarded, but in

[1] See Ch. VIII, p. 152.

her unwritten oral traditions as well, we may learn what was the intention and will of our great high-priest, in providing for his Church a priesthood to mediate in his name between God and man.

CHAPTER II

HOLY ORDERS

§ 1

DEEPLY rooted in the minds of many non-Catholics, there exists a strong prejudice against the whole concept of a distinct and chosen priesthood, endowed with special power and authority. On the other hand, the historical fact is undeniable that, from the earliest ages of the Church, there has existed a priestly body altogether distinct from the laity. The attempt is sometimes made to explain this fact by supposing that it was not the will of Christ to create a distinct priesthood, but that this was due to human intervention. It is alleged that Christ willed all his followers to be priests ; all could baptise, consecrate the Holy Eucharist, forgive sin and preach the gospel ; all could, in fact, exercise the functions which we now regard as being the special prerogative of priests. Very early in the history of Christianity a distinction, it is supposed, was set up between clergy and laity. It was established in order to secure harmony and order in the Church. It was agreed that certain functions should be exercised only by those chosen and delegated for the office by the Christian community, who could withdraw this power at will, in much the same way as a constituency elects a member of Parliament. In the course of time, this elected priesthood arrogated to itself a special power and a distinct

spiritual character bestowed upon it by the sacrament of Holy Orders.

A heterodox theory, such as this, is almost a necessary consequence of doctrinal error in rejecting the idea of sacrifice and denying the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. If the Holy Eucharist is merely a symbol of Christ's presence, merely a repast recalling his memory, then it would appear that any Christian could preside at it. It would be unnecessary to recognise in him any special power, except that, perhaps, which arises from being delegated by his fellows. But if, on the other hand, the bread and wine are changed into the real Body and Blood of Christ, there must be required for this stupendous act a power which Christ alone could bestow on men. Are we to say that every Christian enjoys this privilege ? If so, when did Christ grant it to them ? He granted it to the Apostles alone who were with him in the Supper Room, and who were already favoured with special privileges over the rest. These powers would have died with the Apostles unless they had been authorised to hand them on to others, and there exists no trace of the Apostles bestowing these powers on all Christians in general. If all Christ's followers were invested with the power of consecrating the Body of Christ, would not the attempt of a few to wrest it from them have provoked some dispute ? Many pressing questions disturbed the peace of the early Church but there is no hint of any movement directed against the Presbyterate, as if they had arrogated to themselves powers belonging to every Christian. On the contrary, early Christian documents, as the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, point to the existence of a spiritual power and authority, reserved to those alone who had been deputed by the Apostles and their successors : ' The Apostles were commissioned to preach the Gospel by our Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ was sent

from God. Christ was therefore from God and the Apostles were from Christ . . . they went forth announcing the coming of the Kingdom of God . . . they constituted over the faithful the future bishops and ministers. . . . They established the aforesaid (bishops) and made this law, in order that when they were dead, other approved men might receive their ministry.'[1] Certainly, the faithful selected those who were considered worthy of the priestly office, and even to the present day the Roman Pontifical invites the people to exercise a power of veto over the unworthy. But the constitution of those elected could be validly performed only by the bishops, who possessed the power handed on to them by the Apostles or their successors. The Apostles established the ministry, in various places, by the imposition of hands, a fact abundantly evident from the Acts and the Pastoral Epistles, and their successors continued to do the same.[2]

Some obscurity might arise from those Scriptural texts which speak of all Christians as priests. 'You are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood.'[3] 'He hath made us a kingdom and priests to God and his Father.'[4] There is no foundation for seeing in such texts anything more than the sacerdotal office taken in a very broad and general sense, which does not admit the precise definite function which we attach to the priesthood of a validly ordained person. For the faithful in general are called 'kingly' as well as 'priestly,' but not every Christian is a king, nor necessarily endowed with any kind of ruling authority over his fellows. S. Peter's text recalls that of Exodus which applies exactly the same words to the

[1] 1 Cor. xlii, 2 ; xliv, 2.
[2] Acts vi, 6 ; xiv, 22 ; 1 Tim. iv, 14 ; 2 Tim. i, 6.
[3] 1 Peter ii, 9.
[4] Apoc. i, 6 ; v, 10.

children of Israel ;[1] nothing is so evident in the Jewish religion as the distinct special character of the Levitical priesthood. If by ' priesthood ' in the New Law is meant the power granted by Christ to the Apostles of offering the sacrifice and, therefore, of consecrating the Holy Eucharist, only those Christians are priests to whom this power has been committed.

But once this essential meaning of the word ' priest ' has been carefully established, we can recognise in every Christian the priestly office in a wide and general sense. It implies, as S. Peter himself says, that every Christian offers to God ' spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ ' ;[2] it means that by mortification of the flesh, the followers of Christ present their bodies ' a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God ' ;[3] they must offer by their prayers ' the sacrifice of praise always to God, that is to say, the fruit of lips confessing to his name.'[4] By their incorporation with Christ in baptism, these sacrifices, made by the members of the body in union with its head, have a special value not enjoyed by the equivalent actions of unbaptised persons, and entitles Christians to be called ' priests.' Moreover, the ordained priest, who consecrates the body of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, does so as the representative of all the faithful. Although he alone is endowed with the power of consecrating the sacred elements, he offers Mass on behalf of all present and invites them to pray that their sacrifice may be acceptable to God Almighty. It is their sacrifice, too, because they provide the bread and wine for the oblation, and it is because of this or some equivalent offering that the custom of saying Mass for the intention

[1] Exod. xix, 6.
[2] 1 Peter ii, 5.
[3] Rom. xii, 1.
[4] Heb. xii, 15.

of a particular person has become stabilised in the Church. ' You are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood.'

A further point may need a little elucidation. We live in an age when the Apostolic injunction that ' women keep silence in the Churches '[1] is disregarded. Many non-Catholics welcome their ministration, and people are beginning to ask whether it would not be an excellent thing for women to receive ordination like men. They could bring into the public service of God, in the care of the sick and in dealing intimately with their own sex, qualifications which men do not possess.

There is no need to confuse the issue by discussing the increasing tendency of women, in modern times, to assume various offices and rights which we have been accustomed, in the past, to seeing exercised only by men. It may be good or not. People are entitled to hold their own views on this as on many other subjects. Nor need a Catholic be unduly alarmed or disturbed at seeing women undertake ministerial functions in non-Catholic Churches. A female priesthood is amongst the vagaries of some very early heresies. The priesthood is denied to women, not because of some defect inherent in their character, nor because they are physically unable to perform the priestly functions ; on the contrary, a woman may be considered more heroic in self-sacrifice, more devout, more persuasive than a man. Women are incapable of participating in the priestly character of Christ solely because Christ, ' who did all things well,'[2] elected to choose men, not women, for this particular office in his service. If any one woman were fitted for the office, it was the one who is blessed amongst them all: yet our Lady received none of the priestly

[1] 1 Cor. xiv, 34.
[2] Mark vii, 37.

prerogatives granted to the Apostles. That Christ did not will to ordain women priests is evident from the Gospels and from the universal teaching of the Church, which has always held a female priesthood in abhorrence as reminiscent of paganism. The term 'priestess,' which is met with occasionally in early documents, refers to the wife of a priest, in days before the law of celibacy obtained throughout the Western Church.[1]

On the other hand, although incapable of priestly ordination, the position of women in the active service of the Church was recognised and established in Apostolic times. They assisted at the baptism of women, ministered to the sick and kept order in the portion of the church used by women. They were often known as deaconesses,[2] and were occasionally constituted in their office by some ceremony resembling ordination. Holy women ministered to Christ in his earthly life; they outnumbered men in their courageous following of our Saviour to the foot of the Cross; they were among the first witnesses of his glorious resurrection. Alone of all human beings Mary was conceived immaculate. Following her example they have, in every period of the Church's history, continued to help the cause of Christ by their prayers, by their holy lives, and by every kind of assistance rendered to the service of God. If Christ did not elect to call them to the priesthood, it is because he has designed for them other work in his service. Every priest, like S. Paul, has used their indispensable help, and remembers with gratitude 'those women that have laboured with me in the gospel, whose names are in the book of life.'[3]

All males validly baptised are *capable* of receiving Holy Orders, but the importance of the priestly office and the

[1] Cf. Ferraris, *Bibliotheca*, s.v. Femina, 1–4.
[2] Rom. xvi, 1.
[3] Philip. iv, 3.

sanctity it demands have given rise to a number of laws which forbid the ordination of certain individuals. Some of these laws may occasionally be dispensed for proper reasons, in much the same way that the impediments of marriage may be dispensed, or they may cease of themselves when the reason for the prohibition has been removed. Thus, any previous tie or obligation inconsistent with sacerdotal duties renders ordination unlawful, for example, the obligation of military service or the holding of an office which is forbidden to clerics ; also, because of the danger of inconstancy, neophytes (those recently baptised) and the sons of non-Catholics are denied the priesthood.[1] There are other obstacles, of a more definite and permanent character, which constitute what is canonically known as IRREGULARITY, and prohibit not only the reception of an Order but also the exercise of powers already received. Some of these arise through no personal fault on the part of the individual, e.g. illegitimate birth and bodily defects such as blindness, epilepsy or mutilation. Others have more the nature of a punishment for some grave crime such as apostasy from the faith or homicide.[2] For adequate reasons a dispensation from the less serious impediments or irregularities may be obtained from the competent ecclesiastical authority. In these parts, for example, a dispensation from the impediment arising from non-Catholic parentage is easily granted.

§ 2

Christ Our Lord in founding a Church with a sacrificial priesthood, distinct from the laity, bestowed on the

[1] Canon 987.
[2] Canons 984, 985.

Apostles a share in his own priesthood, and this priestly power was handed on to their successors. Within the priestly hierarchy there is found a variety and distinction of functions. The most important difference, and one which has far-reaching consequences in the constitution of the Church, is that existing between the ordinary priesthood and the episcopate. It is of Catholic faith that ' bishops, who have succeeded to the position of the Apostles, principally belong to this hierarchical order ; that they are placed, as S. Paul says, by the Holy Ghost to rule the Church of God ;[1] that they are superior to priests ; administer the sacrament of confirmation and ordain the ministers of the Church ; that they can perform many other functions over which others of an inferior order have no power.'[2] A subsequent canon of the Council of Trent condemns under anathema those who deny the superiority of the episcopate, or who say that the powers of the episcopate are possessed in common by the priesthood.[3]

The faith of the Church is clear and definite, and by the beginning of the second century we find, in the letters of S. Ignatius, the position of bishop (ἐπίσκοπος, overseer) and subordinate priests (πρεσβυτέροι, elders) recognised and taken for granted in the Churches of Asia Minor. But it is a most difficult problem to decide how exactly this difference arose.

In the epistles of S. Paul and in the Acts of the Apostles the distinction is not always apparent, simply because the terms ' bishop ' and ' priest ' had not, at that period, a fixed signification. They were interchangeable and synonymous. Thus, S. Paul at Miletus addresses the rulers of the Church, and they are styled in one verse

[1] Acts xx, 28.
[2] Trent, Session XXIII, cap. 4.
[3] Canon 7.

'priests,' in another verse 'bishops.'[1] The qualities required in a candidate for what is called the 'episcopate' are substantially identical with those required for what is called the 'priesthood,' and the two words are even united in one description: 'I left thee in Crete that thou shouldst . . . ordain *priests* in every city if any be without crime . . . for a *bishop* must be without crime, etc.'[2] Failing any exact meaning in the use of the words employed, we have to decide by some other means whether those mentioned in the New Testament, who enjoyed the sacerdotal office, were all priests or all bishops. In other words, did they all possess the power of ordaining others, possessed by the Apostles, or did they not?

It does not seem very likely that they were all bishops, for the distinct character of the episcopate consists in the power of ordaining others and of presiding *alone* as the chief ecclesiastical authority of a district. But in the Acts and Epistles it is apparently a plural presbyterate which possessed the authority of ruling a Church, and there are no indications that the priestly college exercised the power of ordaining other priests.[3] It is evident from the New Testament that a plural presbyterate existed in the Churches founded by the Apostles. It is also certain that, at the beginning of the second century, these Churches and their presbyterate were ruled by a single bishop with full episcopal authority. The problem consists in determining the manner in which this single

[1] Acts xx, 17, 28. [2] Titus i, 5–7.

[3] S. Paul (1 Tim. iv, 14) speaks of the grace that was in Timothy with the imposition of the *hands of the priesthood.* But he also speaks (2 Tim. i, 6) of the grace 'which is in thee by the imposition of *my* hands.' We are, therefore, entitled to regard this intervention of the 'priesthood' in ordination as merely the equivalent to the liturgical practice still observed most solemnly at ordinations.

episcopal control arose. For the sake of clearness the subject may be regarded under a three-fold aspect :

i. Any theory which derives the episcopal office from the simple presbyterate is completely opposed to the faith of the Church, no matter by what process it is supposed to have happened. The episcopate is of divine origin, established by Christ as something distinct from the priesthood, and it has descended from Christ through the Apostles.

ii. The Apostles, in the Churches founded by them, left simple priests who are called either ' overseers ' or ' elders ' indifferently. These infant Churches were governed from afar by the Apostolic authority of their founders, as we can see from the epistles written by S. Paul to the early Christian communities. But the Apostles also bestowed on certain priests the plenitude of the sacerdotal office, i.e. the power to ordain others, and we have examples of these bishops, in the accepted sense of the word, among the companions of S. Paul. They were sent by him with authority to settle the affairs of various Churches, for example, S. Timothy at Ephesus[1] and Thessalonica ;[2] or like Titus, in Crete, they were commissioned to ordain other priests, a power which belongs only to the episcopate.[3]

iii. There is, indeed, no clear mention in the New Testament of a bishop, other than the Apostles, presiding *permanently* over an infant Church and its presbyterate, and exercising powers similar to those used by Timothy and Titus. But there are indications that the Churches were, in fact, ruled in this way. Each of the seven Churches to which S. John writes in the first three chapters of the Apocalypse has a presiding ' angel ' ;

[1] 1 Tim. i, 3.
[2] 1 Thess. iii, 2.
[3] Titus i, 5.

S. Paul reminds the Ephesians that they were ' built upon the foundation of the apostles and of the prophets.'[1] It would seem extremely likely that the word ' angel ' and possibly the word ' prophet ' denote the presiding pastor. We must remember, too, that we are dealing with *a human society* having its own sacred rites and laws. The government of the Apostolic Churches, in the absence of their founders, could scarcely have been exercised by an oligarchy or collective presbyterate ; one of them must have been given special authority over the rest. We know of such delegated authority being exercised by Timothy and Titus, and the silence of the sacred records is no proof that a similar power was not enjoyed by the presiding pastor in each of the Churches founded by the Apostles. The only point of obscurity is whether each Church had a presiding bishop from the time of its Apostolic foundation. The Apostles may have elected not to confide the episcopal dignity to any of the newly ordained priests, until their lives were tested and approved ; in the meanwhile the Churches were governed from a distance. But before they died, as S. Clement indicates, they bestowed the plenitude of the sacerdotal office on certain of the presbyterate. By the beginning of the second century the title ' bishop,' which was formerly used as a synonym for ' priest,' became restricted in the sense the Church has always preserved, and it was applied to the presiding pastor as his proper title. Such venerated names as Polycarp of Smyrna and Ignatius of Antioch are, without any possibility of mistake, recognised as the bishops of the Churches governed by them.

Of the remaining ranks of the hierarchy there is no need to speak at any length. The diaconate is frequently mentioned in the New Testament, and, by the middle of

[1] Eph. ii, 20.

the third century, the subdiaconate and the four minor orders—all partitions, as it were, of the diaconate—are well established and recognised. The sacerdotal office was instituted by Christ at the Last Supper, and it is by virtue of some more or less intimate relationship with the Holy Eucharist that not only the episcopate and priesthood, but all the lesser orders, derive their functions. The *deacon* distributes Holy Communion; the *subdeacon* prepares the sacred vessels; the *acolyte* the bread and wine; the *exorcist* prepares those for receiving the sacrament who may be under the power of evil spirits. 'You cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord and of the table of devils';[1] the *lector*, in reading the Holy Scriptures, instructs the minds of the faithful who are approaching the altar, and the *ostiarius* guards the doors of the Church in which the sacred mysteries are celebrated.[2]

The 'tonsure' was originally, and still is in the Eastern Church, joined to the reception of the first minor order. But it is not an 'Order' since it implies the possession of no spiritual power. It is simply the mark which distinguishes a cleric from a lay person. By its reception all the common privileges and obligations of the clerical state are assumed. The shaving of the head was, amongst the Romans, one of the badges of slavery, and its religious use seems to have been introduced by early monks on a motive of humility and self-abnegation. By the fifth century the custom was observed in various forms by all clerics, and it became separated from Orders by about the seventh century. The wearing of the tonsure is still an obligation imposed by the common law of the Church, but in England during the times of persecution it was not observed, and its non-observance has continued,

[1] 1 Cor. x, 21.

[2] *Summa Theol.*, Supplement, 37, 2.

with the implicit sanction of the Holy See, although the reason for not observing the law no longer exists.

The gradual development of the various orders beneath the diaconate, together with the clerical tonsure, dates from a period in the history of the Church when subjects were ordained permanently for one of the various functions to which the conferring of an order gave them a right. They might be promoted to higher orders or they might elect to stay in a lower rank. But the law of the Church now is that no one may receive the tonsure unless intending to become a priest.[1] It is only, therefore, during the period of preparation for the priesthood, when the various orders are received at intervals, that their different functions are exercised by those who are not priests.

§ 3

The transmission to other men of a share in the priesthood of Christ is effected by an external visible rite called the sacrament of Holy Orders. The word ' order ' means the harmonious relation between various things, the subordination of the lower to the higher. The word is aptly used in a special sense as signifying the varying ranks and degrees of the priestly hierarchy, and from this use of the word a still more specialised sense of the same word denotes the sacramental rite by which the various degrees of priestly power are conferred.

Human nature is so constituted that our external bodily senses are the instruments by which the spiritual part of our nature is reached. All the external rites and ceremonies of the Church rest on this fact. God has accommodated himself to our human nature by providing us with certain external visible signs causing grace. They resemble other ecclesiastical rites and religious ceremonies but

[1] Canon 973, § 1.

differ from them completely in this respect: they were instituted by Christ Our Lord and their spiritual effect on our souls results from the use of them in the way Christ has determined, not from the virtues or dispositions of the recipient. For they are as instruments in the hands of Christ and, although administered by other men, Christ is the principal source and minister of them all.

Of the seven Sacraments, five are destined for the sanctification of the individual. The remaining two have a public and social character: Matrimony for the sanctification of married people with a view to the generation and education of children; Holy Orders for sanctifying those whose office it is to minister to their fellows in things spiritual. We can perceive a two-fold effect in the reception of Holy Orders: there is the character of the priesthood of Christ, of which we have already spoken, namely, spiritual power over the real and the mystical body of Christ: and there is, accompanying the priestly character, an increase of sanctifying grace which gives the recipient a title to the special assistance of God, in fulfilling all the duties of his state of life.

That these are the effects intended by the Church is evident from the words and ceremonies accompanying the rite of ordination. But before any religious rite, no matter how sacred it is, can be called a 'Sacrament' we must derive its institution from Christ himself. The institution of this Sacrament took place at the Last Supper, when Christ commissioned his Apostles to offer the sacrifice of his body and blood: 'Do this in commemoration of me.' It is from this supreme priestly function of sacrifice that every other sacerdotal power is derived: when, after his resurrection, Christ gave the Apostles power to forgive sin,[1] commissioned them to

[1] John xx, 22.

teach and baptise[1] and in general to rule and govern in his name, all these powers were so many amplifications of the radical power of offering the sacrifice of his body and blood, shed for us and for many unto the remission of sins.

Inasmuch as Christ's sacrifice was for all time, it is equally evident that it was his intention that the priestly powers should be handed on by those same Apostles to their successors, who in turn should hand them on to others. We are concerned with a spiritual power of profound significance, and it is the teaching of the Church that Christ Our Lord, the fount and origin of all priesthood, not only shared his priestly powers with the Apostles and commissioned them to ordain others, but that he also determined the rite to be employed.

In saying that the Sacraments of the New Law were instituted by Christ, we mean that Christ himself chose the external rite by which they were to be administered, at least in its substance and in all essentials. In the course of time, the Church, under the divine guidance, has determined more exactly this external rite and has added a fitting ceremonial to accompany its administration. But the Church has no power to make changes or introduce innovations in the substance of the external sign which Christ has instituted ; for it is the prerogative of God, the author of grace, to determine the means by which that grace shall be conveyed to the souls of men. Thus, in the sacrament of Baptism, the use of water with the prescribed words are the substance of the sacrament as instituted by Christ ; in Extreme Unction, prayer and anointing with oil are, on the testimony of the Apostle S. James,[2] the external rite of this sacrament.

[1] Matt. xxviii, 18.
[2] James v, 14.

The Sacrament of Penance was instituted by Christ in the form of a judgement, a decision that sin is forgiven or retained. In various ways the Church, teaching in the name of Christ, has determined more closely the sacramental sign instituted by him. The water of baptism is to be used in a certain way ; certain oil and certain words are to be employed in Extreme Unction ; a certain form of absolution from sin is to be used in the tribunal of Penance. It is, in many ways, a most difficult thing to decide exactly the precise limits between the sacramental rite as instituted by Christ, and the further elements due to the intervention of the Church. In practice we must omit nothing prescribed by the Church in administering the rite of a sacrament ; should any doubt arise, the sacrament may need to be repeated conditionally. It is the common practice, for example, to re-baptise conditionally all converts to the Church, even though their previous baptism was most probably valid.

If we examine the Rite of Ordination, as contained in the Roman Pontifical, we shall find that throughout the Mass of Ordination there are a number of deeply significant ceremonies and prayers, which have been used in conferring Orders from the earliest times. The question that presents itself is to decide which of these external rites are to be considered as due to the intervention of the Church, and which are of divine institution ? It is admitted by all that the solemn imposition of the chasuble and the anointing of the hands, deeply significant though they are, do not represent the essential rite of ordination. But there has been considerable doubt, in the past, in deciding on the character of three quite distinct rites which find a prominent place in ordination. These are (1) The imposition of hands by the bishop and other clergy accompanied by solemn prayer invoking upon the ordinands the grace of the priesthood. (2) The solemn tradition of the chalice and paten containing bread and

wine accompanied by the form : ' Receive power to offer sacrifice to God and to celebrate Masses, both for the living and the dead.' (3) The imposition of hands at the end of the Mass, accompanied by the words granting power to forgive sin.

Of these three elements it was the second which many medieval theologians regarded as essential to the rite of conferring Orders, and their teaching was expressed in the famous decree of the Council of Florence (1439), framed for the instruction of the Armenians in everything concerning the sacramental system in the Western Church.

In spite, however, of this decree, the opinion has been gaining ground for centuries, and may now be taken as the common teaching of theological schools, that the rite of Orders essentially consists in the first imposition of hands. All the other rites used are so many added ceremonies for the purpose of signifying more precisely the complete effect of priestly ordination. They have been added by the Church and may never be omitted. The medieval theologians stressed the tradition of the chalice and paten, partly owing to their lack of knowledge concerning the method of priestly ordination in early times ; partly, also, owing to the fact that the ceremony of offering the appropriate instruments is certainly the essential rite of conferring minor orders. The sacraments being external signs, there is, in each of them, an undetermined element like oil or water, and there is the element which crystallises and determines exactly the signification of the rite—usually a verbal formula. Employing the familiar terminology of Aristotle the undetermined element was styled ' matter ' and the determining element ' form.' The words ' matter ' and ' form ' are, therefore, a very useful and necessary analysis of a sacramental rite as instituted by Christ. But, in regarding the essential matter and form of Holy

Orders as the tradition of the chalice and paten, together with the words granting priestly power to the recipient, the medieval theologians were in error, and their error was perpetuated in later writers.

The very concept of priestly power being derived from Christ, and the notion of a sacrament as an external sign instituted by him, force us to regard, as of divine institution, only that element which has persisted in use from the earliest times both in the East and West. This element is the first imposition of hands. It is incontestable that up to the tenth century the Western Church conferred Orders in this way, without the tradition of instruments, and the Eastern Church has never ceased to regard the imposition of hands as alone essential to the rite. For the purpose of determining more accurately and precisely the powers conferred by priestly ordination, the Church added the tradition of paten and chalice, and it was for the purpose of instructing the Armenians in the full and integral Western rite that the decree of Florence was framed. To defend the medieval view concerning the essential rite of ordination has the advantage of preserving intact, in its full and obvious meaning, the teaching of the Council of Florence, but it creates still greater difficulties. It would imply that the Church has the power of changing the matter and form of the sacraments.[1] The traditional method of dissecting the sacramental sign into matter and form can be applied to Holy Orders by regarding the imposition of hands as the *matter*. But this action is capable of meaning various things, and is part of the rite of Confirmation. It must, therefore, be determined more exactly by the accompanying prayer or preface, and this prayer can rightly be called the *form* of the sacrament. Not only the tradition

[1] Cf. Cardinal Van Rossum, *De Essentia Sacramenti Ordinis*.

of instruments, but the subsequent imposition of hands at the end of the ordination rite, must be regarded as accessory to the essential form. They must never be omitted owing to their profound significance, and also because they have been regarded by some as part of the essential rite. The latter ceremony, in which the grant of the priestly power to forgive sins is expressly mentioned, has a further meaning when we remember that Christ himself, having ordained the Apostles priests at the Last Supper, conferred the power of forgiving sins after his Resurrection from the dead.[1]

The same decision must be made with regard to the diaconate. There are abundant texts of the New Testament describing the imposition of hands by the Apostles in conferring the priesthood and the diaconate. They are separate sacraments since separate and distinct powers are granted in each case. The subdiaconate and the minor orders can be regarded as being contained within the diaconate, and in this sense they are of divine institution. But their gradual determination was left to the Church to settle in the course of time.

It was at the Last Supper that Christ ordained his Apostles priests, and it might well be that he imposed hands upon them, but there is no indication to this effect in the New Testament. Being God and the author of the Sacraments, he could confer spiritual powers without any external rite. One thing is certain from the New Testament. On the morrow of his departure from this world and ascension into Heaven, the rite of imposing hands in conferring the priesthood and the diaconate appears repeatedly in the inspired records of the Acts and Epistles. It has continued in an unbroken succession to our own day, and is the sole element in the conferring of Orders which can be regarded, with certainty, as of divine institution.

[1] John xx, 23.

It may be asked whether the episcopate could be validly conferred on a layman, or whether it is absolutely essential to receive the priesthood first. The question is closely connected with that of the origin of the hierarchy in the early Church. In a matter of such obscurity it is not possible to give a certain answer. There are examples, in the early Church of Rome, of deacons being raised to the episcopate immediately, but it was a practice which has never been the recognised procedure. The episcopate is the fulness of the priesthood, and the common doctrine is that it cannot be validly conferred except upon one who is already a priest. This would seem to argue that it is a separate sacrament from that of priestly Orders. The difference between the priesthood and the episcopate, in the exercise of sacred functions, consists primarily in the power of ordaining other priests. It is of faith that this power belongs to the episcopate alone. In the New Testament itself we have seen that the Apostles themselves ordained priests, and commissioned others to do so,[1] but this prerogative was not enjoyed by the ordinary presbyterate.

The Church has recognised from the earliest times the existence of a close union of dependence and authority between the clergy of a diocese and its bishop. On the reception of the tonsure a cleric becomes ascribed, incardinated, to the diocese for whose service he is destined, and he cannot abandon it except by the appropriate legal procedure. In no case is it possible for a cleric to exist without special allegiance to some diocese and its bishop.[2] In deciding which diocese he shall join, the ordinary and normal course is for a candidate to offer himself for the service of the diocese in which he has been brought up. It is usually in need of

[1] Titus i, 5.
[2] Canon 111.

priests and a native priesthood is, for every reason, to be desired. But there is no obligation to do so ; on the contrary, there may exist many valid reasons urging a person to pass his priestly life in some other place. But, in order to secure the ordination of fit subjects, the Church requires a testimonial from the bishop of each place in which the candidate has lived. Moreover, it is required, under severe penalties, that no Orders may be conferred except by the ' proper ' bishop of the candidate or with that bishop's permission. The method which determined the bishop ' proper ' for ordinations has varied at different times, but it now rests solely on the permanent domicile of the candidate. If he is dwelling in the diocese in which he was born, the bishop of that place is competent to ordain him ; but, if he is not dwelling in his native diocese, the bishop of the place of his domicile must require from him an oath to remain therein before he can lawfully ordain him.[1] In both cases, a bishop who is ' proper ' for ordaining his subjects may duly authorise another bishop to do so. In the law of the Church no person can acquire his own personal and permanent ' domicile ' until the age of twenty-one. This means, for practical purposes, that a young man desiring to be ordained for a diocese, other than that of his birth and domicile, cannot easily do so until he has reached his majority. He can then offer himself to the diocese of his choice, acquire a domicile within it (usually by entering the Seminary), and on taking an oath of permanence he can be lawfully ordained for its service.

[1] Canon 956.

CHAPTER III

THE PRIESTLY LIFE

§ 1

WHEN this country was violently robbed of its Catholic inheritance, a new doctrine and a new 'ministry of the word' was imposed upon the people and, for the first time in many centuries, the State religion of England became the most curious of all anomalies : a religion without sacrifice. The Christian sacrifice of the Mass was ruthlessly suppressed by the penal laws; all reference to handing on a priestly sacrificial power was deleted from the Ordinal and was entirely absent from the intention of those who ordained the ministers of the new religion. The Apostolic succession of Holy Orders was thereby lost. The newly ordained were not priests, for a minister of religion who lacks the power to offer sacrifice is not a priest; he is a preacher, a catechist, a custodian of morals; he is, if you like, an example and an inspiration to the people over whom he is placed, their father and friend, one who comforts and supports the weak and needy in the sorrows of life. But, lacking the character of the priesthood, which, by the institution of Christ, is bestowed in the valid administration of Holy Orders, he is not a Christian priest.

The contrast between the new religion and the old could not have been better expressed than by the

title ' Mass-priests,' a name given to the Catholic clergy in contempt and derision, but which is, nevertheless, their crown and their glory. For to offer the eternal sacrifice of the Mass is the primary purpose of priestly ordination, its chief office, the first in importance of all priestly functions. ' Do this in commemoration of me.' In offering this sacrifice the priest is united to Christ, the great high-priest, and offers the oblation in his name. Were a newly ordained priest to offer Mass only once before dying, his would not be a useless or wasted life. To offer sacrifice on behalf of the people whom he represents is the first duty of a priest's life, so evident and necessary that we need no more than mention it at the head of a description of priestly activities. ' For every high-priest taken from amongst men, is ordained for men in the things that pertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins.'[1]

A further priestly obligation, one very closely connected with that of saying Mass, is the recitation of the Divine Office. It is a function of the priestly life which is very familiar to all the laity, even to non-Catholics. They frequently see a priest reciting his Breviary—when occasion demands it—in trains and in all sorts of places not given over expressly to divine worship. He applies himself to it steadily and recollectedly, and gives the impression to a casual observer of a man engaged in the fulfilment of a most serious obligation. As the end of the day approaches with the Office unsaid, it is a pressing anxiety until it is accomplished. It is the last thing a priest thinks of excusing himself from, even in circumstances where the Church would tolerate its omission. Even during the war, the clergy of France, fighting in the line, were supplied with the weekly Office in a convenient form, in order that it should be recited whenever possible.

[1] Heb. v, 1.

The Apostles themselves willingly gave over to others the various works of Christian charity in order that they might apply themselves to prayer. The recital of the Office is, in fact, for a priest, a daily obligation which binds him under pain of mortal sin.

The reason underlying this grave priestly duty is contained in the prayer said before the recitation of the Breviary: 'O Lord, in union with that divine intention with which Thou, on this earth, didst offer praise to God, I now recite this office.' The Office is of such supreme importance and gravity because it is the prayer of Christ, which the Church, the Body of Christ, continues to offer in his name. In the psalmody, which forms so large a part of the Breviary Office, the priest recites the actual prayers which Christ himself used, psalms which, in many cases, were composed in order to voice the praises of the Messias centuries before his coming. The Church teaches with Christ's authority, administers his Sacraments, offers his Sacrifice. Through the public and corporate recitation of the Divine Office, the prayer also of Christ is perpetuated by his ordained ministers. It reaches the throne of God, not as the prayer of an individual, but as the prayer of the Church united to that of Christ 'always living to make intercession for us.'[1] In this consists the value of the Office. It should be, and generally is, a source of inspiration in the private life of the priest; but its recitation is a part of the priestly duty not precisely for this reason, but chiefly because, as a priest, he shares in the mediatorship of Christ, and through the public office of the Church he prays to God for the whole of humanity whom he represents. The words of praise, thanksgiving and supplication, uttered once by a Divine Person on this earth, are now continued in the Office by the agency of human beings, just as

[1] Heb. vii, 25.

the sacrifice of Christ is continued in the Holy Eucharist.

Priestly mediation between God and man implies not only being the channel of human homage to God, but also the channel of God's benefits and graces to humanity. The Sacraments which Christ has instituted are external visible signs which, by his divine power, cause grace in the recipient. They constitute an ordered system corresponding to the whole course of our earthly life. The soul is born again by Baptism and regenerated into a life and destiny which is above nature. It is brought to the full height of manhood, in things supernatural, by being strengthened with the grace given in Confirmation. This life is nourished by Eucharistic food, restored after the deathly sickness of post-baptismal sin in the tribunal of Penance, and comforted in its dread passage from this world by the Last Anointing. Through human channels God is bringing the number of his elect to completion, and the Sacrament of Matrimony, which consists in the marriage contract of Christians, strengthens and sanctifies their union. Holy Orders, as we have seen, perpetuates the priestly office of Christ for the ruling and salvation of his people.

A large portion of the priestly life is devoted to the actual administration of these sacraments, or to preparing the faithful for their reception. Above all, it is through the Sacrament of Penance that he is brought into the closest contact with human souls. It was instituted by Christ in a judicial form, i.e. the power of binding or loosing from sin implies the necessity of forming a judgement, consequent on the self-accusation of the penitent. It is for this reason that we speak of the 'tribunal' of Penance. Inasmuch as the valid exercise of judicial functions requires the granting of jurisdiction, a priest may hear confessions only in those places and for those cases for which jurisdiction has been

given him by the Church. The competent and careful exercise of this tremendous office, so closely affecting the souls of men, requires in the priest a special knowledge. It is becoming more and more recognised that the equipment of a priest, in the due exercise of so delicate a function as healing souls, is of a highly specialised character. The office of a confessor is one of the few avocations which cannot be properly performed without technical training, and the legislation of the Church aims at securing that the judgement given by the confessor shall be accurate and his conduct above all reproach.

But of much greater importance than the mental equipment of the priest giving absolution is the fact that he is the representative of Christ, who in his infinite mercy treated all repentant sinners with love and sympathy. The priest, as the ambassador of Christ and the dispenser of his mysteries, tries to regard the penitent solely with the eyes of Christ, 'who can have compassion on them that err.'[1] A priest's work in the confessional for long hours at a time may be laborious and tiring, but it is a work which, more than any other, exhibits the mercy and patience of him who was the friend of all sinners. It is in the confessional, too, that the priest sees with his own eyes, in a manner denied to other human beings, not only the evil depths of which human nature is capable, but the heights of virtue and sanctity to which the grace of God can lead the souls of men. He sees heroic fortitude in resisting temptation and in bearing the sufferings of life, and he enjoys a close contact with the hidden sanctity and self-abnegation of many whose lives may be reckoned commonplace by everyone else.

There is another function that occupies a very important place among the duties and activities of a

[1] Heb. v, 2.

priest. He has to continue the teaching office of Christ. In the school, in the confessional very frequently, in the private instruction of converts, in answering the difficulties and objections of non-Catholics, he is the appointed channel whence the truths of divine revelation are brought to the knowledge of the people for whom Christ died. He is engaged in this teaching office ' in season and out of season.'[1]

At appointed times he has also to expound, in a more solemn manner, the gospel of Christ by preaching publicly in the Church. Among the various religious bodies which abound amongst us, sects which, as a rule, completely reject the functions of a Christian priesthood in offering sacrifice and administering the sacraments, the ' preacher ' necessarily predominates in the popular estimation. But in the Catholic Church this is not so. Important as the office of preaching is, it is not the primary purpose for which a man is ordained ; nor even if we regard the priest uniquely as the mouthpiece of a Church teaching Christ's doctrine, is public oratory and eloquence the sole means, or even the most efficient means, of bringing Christian truth home to the minds of men. In numberless other ways, quite apart and distinct from public speaking, the priest fulfils the divine commission to ' go and teach all nations.' It is important to bear this in mind, for to many people speaking in public is a nameless terror, and one that does not always vanish with use. In attempting, therefore, to portray the various occupations of the priestly life, the obligation of preaching in public should not be allowed to assume too important a place. The priest who, conscious of the sublimity of his office, tries to express clearly and plainly the moral and doctrinal teaching of the Church, will carry weight by words spoken with sincerity and

[1] 2 Tim. iv, 2.

conviction, even though he lacks the polished diction of an accomplished speaker.

§ 2

'For if you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet not many fathers. For in Christ Jesus by the gospel I have begotten you.'[1] It is the 'pastoral' office of the priest, the paternal relations existing between him and the faithful, that differentiate those priests to whom the care of souls has been committed from others whose vocation may be incompatible with the cares of a parish. It is with the former that we are now chiefly concerned, the priests to whom the laity are accustomed to look for guidance and help in their personal spiritual needs, as distinct from those whose lives are passed in teaching and study, or in the contemplative and monastic life. Sometimes the parochial clergy are also members of some religious Order, to whose rule and superiors they owe allegiance. But, in the vast majority of cases, the spiritual needs of the people are under the care of priests immediately subject to the bishop who ordained them, ascribed to no other religious corporation than the diocese to which they are permanently incardinated, bound only by the canonical laws and sacred obligations which rule the priestly life. Their Order is the 'Ordo sacerdotalis,' the priestly Order, the Order of Melchisedech, founded and established by Christ himself. The many and various religious Orders flourishing within the Church have been established for special purposes. They spread or decline, they are suppressed, or re-established, according to the needs of the Church, or according to the greed of the State which covets their possessions. But the priestly Order, under the immediate jurisdiction of the episcopate, has existed from its

[1] 1 Cor. iv, 15.

foundation by Christ and must remain to the end of time.[1] But, wherever the pastoral office is exercised over the laity, whether by secular or regular clergy, their power and jurisdiction is derived from the bishop of the diocese. He is, as it were, wedded to his Church and lives only to further the spiritual interests of all the faithful under his pastoral care. The priests, commissioned by him to share in this grave responsibility of feeding the flock, have other duties over and above that of saying Mass, administering the sacraments and preaching. A priest to whom the care of souls has been committed has the obligation of going out beyond the walls of his Church, searching for the sheep who are lost, caring for the sick, safeguarding the faith of future generations by seeing that all the children within his parish have a Catholic education, and reconciling to the Church those who have been separated by heresy and schism.

In doing this work to the best of his ability he is merely fulfilling the duties of his state of life. The way he accomplishes this solemn duty is not only the measure of his own personal sanctity; it is even the measure of his own salvation. Exactly as in every station of life its duties and obligations bind under sin, even under grave sin, so also do these sacred obligations bind the priest who by his state is entrusted with the care of souls. 'Woe unto me if I preach not the gospel.'[2] It is an obligation which is largely due to the law of fraternal charity, for the love we are bound to show to our brethren in their necessities, if we would observe the law of Christ, has an altogether special application to those necessities which are spiritual. But a priest with the care of souls is generally supported by the people,

[1] See Note D, § 2, p. 234.
[2] 1 Cor. ix, 16.

and he is bound in justice to minister to their spiritual necessities.

We live in an age of intense preoccupation with philanthropic and social work connected with the *material* well-being of society. Very commonly, outside the Catholic Church, a minister of religion is regarded almost entirely as the accredited agent for furthering various schemes for the material welfare of the masses. The priest occupies an important place in activities of this kind, for the law of Christian charity is not restricted to the necessities of the soul alone. Yet, we have frequently to recall to mind the fact that the pastoral office of the priest is concerned, chiefly and primarily, with the *spiritual* welfare of the souls committed to his care. Indirectly their material welfare is likewise his concern, for the soul cannot be reached, in many cases, except through alleviating bodily needs ; and every kind of assistance given to the needs of others is an expression of the love of Christ. 'I was hungry and you gave me to eat.'[1] Principally, however, the object of priestly zeal must be the spiritual welfare of souls. As the meaning of the supernatural becomes obscured in a materialistic age, so also increases the likelihood of the spiritual ministrations of the priest being given the second, instead of the first, place in the popular estimation. This was especially noticeable during the war. The chaplain of a regiment was expected, in many cases, to be a universal provider, and to be ready and anxious to do everything and anything. His spiritual ministrations could very easily be allowed to take quite a subordinate place. This was the temptation offered by the devil to Christ in the wilderness, a temptation which he rejected and which the Christian priesthood must always reject. 'Not in bread alone doth man live.'[2]

[1] Matt. xxv, 35.
[2] Matt. iv, 4.

God has destined us to an end which is above nature. He has adopted us as sons into his family through Christ, God and man, the bridge and the mediator between heaven and earth. The divine life of Grace, which transforms our souls and makes them partakers of the divine nature,[1] reaches us through only one channel and mediation, that of Christ Our Lord, and this mediatorship is continued in the priesthood, especially where it is joined to the pastoral office. The motive, therefore, which actuates the priest's life and governs all his activities in the care of souls, is to increase the kingdom of God on earth, to bring as many souls as possible to the knowledge and love of Christ Our Lord, to rescue the weak from the danger of eternal separation from God, and to develop and bring to perfection souls who are already enjoying the life of Grace. The priest is the appointed channel for this purpose and is so regarded by the faithful. His chief dread is lest, through his neglect, any one of those committed to his care should perish, and his title to eternal happiness will be the presence of all those souls living with him in the sight of God. The prayer of the Church for the chief shepherd of souls is 'that he may reach eternal life *together with the flock* entrusted to his care.'

For one who has such an office to perform, personal attraction and influence count for a great deal. It is not the personality of the priest, indeed, but his endowment with the character of Christ's priesthood that gives him whatever power and value he may possess. But there is no doubt whatever that the personal element does enter in, and like everything else must be used for the service of Christ. Experience shows that personal contact between priest and people, especially when he visits them in their own homes, is absolutely necessary for

[1] 2 Peter i, 4.

their spiritual welfare. It is, without any question, the most arduous of his duties, and attended with much disappointment. It may often be impossible owing to more pressing work, but the priest who is able to visit, not merely his sick parishioners, but the homes of all entrusted to his care, discovers countless opportunities for the exercise of his priestly ministry. The charming picture of Chaucer's parish priest is the ideal which few priests with care of souls fail to attain in some measure :

> Wide was his parish, and houses far asunder,
> But he ne left nought for no rain ne thunder,
> In sickness and in mischief to visit
> The farthest in his parish, much and lite,
> Upon his feet, and in his hand a staff.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> He waited after no pomp ne reverence,
> Ne maked him no spiced conscience,
> But Christes lore and his apostles twelve
> He taught, but first followed it himselve.

Personal influence exercised in this way is not an accomplishment that can be taught in the Seminary. It grows and develops according to the measure of one's own appreciation of the pastoral office. Nor is it merely the kind of popularity which some men naturally possess, and which, in a priest, can very easily lead to a lowering of his office in the eyes of the faithful. It is something spiritual and supernatural. Its source is found in the desire to help others on a motive of divine charity, and nothing else can take its place : sympathy in speaking and listening, unselfishness in showing a living interest in the affairs of other people, a willingness to forego the precedence and honour usually accorded to the clerical profession, skill in discovering the hidden goodness in others, all these characteristics reveal in the priest's personality the charity of Christ so profoundly described

by S. Paul in a well-known passage : ' Charity is patient, is kind : charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely : is not puffed up. Is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil : Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth : Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.'[1]

It will be easily perceived, from this description of a priest's duties and obligations, that his life is not one of dignified ease and decorous inactivity.[2] His work will, of course, vary according to the locality in which he is placed, but in any fairly large town he will have very little time to call his own. In the growing state of Catholicism in English-speaking countries the senior priest, more often than not, has to shoulder a heavy financial responsibility due to the erection of Church and Schools. It is not his personal debt, but belongs to the mission and the diocese ; yet, for all practical purposes it is personal, since, as long as he remains in the place, the interest must be paid and the capital debt reduced by his own efforts in collecting the money from the people. This may often be a serious anxiety in his life. But, for a man who has a vocation for the pastoral office of the priesthood, the rest of his work and responsibilities will be a source of the greatest happiness. The necessity of fasting till well after midday on Sundays may be a strain on his physical strength. The service of a large hospital or public institution may prove exhausting, and several hours at a stretch spent in the confessional is a far more tiring experience than people imagine ; but the close contact with souls, and the comfort he alone can give them, more than compensate for the physical fatigue endured in ministering to them. He is the dispenser of

[1] 1 Cor. xiii, 4–7.

[2] Cf. *Practical Suggestions for the Newly Ordained*, by Canon J. Dunford.

the mysteries of God, and it is with a supernatural purpose and on a supernatural plane that all his activities turn. By reason of his priesthood and the special assistance of God accompanying it, he is able to exercise a tremendous influence over the souls of the faithful; they call him 'father' and treat him as such, and any priest who is even moderately faithful to the high ideals of his office, enjoys the reverence and affection of the people to a degree which must be experienced to be understood.

If this picture of the life of a secular priest, inadequate though it is, appears too arduous and difficult to a candidate for the priesthood, it may argue that he is not being called by God to make a sacrifice of this nature; it may be that he should be advised to seek the priesthood in some religious order to which the care of souls is not attached. But it will be found in the majority of cases that, provided the priesthood is desired with the intention of spending one's life in the cause of Christ, a closer understanding of the meaning of the priesthood, and a deeper appreciation of the virtue of Charity, will gradually have the effect of overcoming any initial distaste for the manifold activities which must accompany the care of souls.

§ 3

We have considered the priestly life, so far, chiefly from the aspect which is concerned with the service of others. It remains to examine the more intimate and private obligations assumed with the priesthood, obligations closely joined to the care of souls but which do not appear much on the surface.

Very closely connected with the whole concept of the pastoral office is the obligation of obedience to the bishop of the diocese. At his ordination the newly ordained priest

promises obedience in a most solemn manner. For the bishop is the unit of the pastoral office and on him lies the immediate responsibility for all the souls under his care: it is for this reason that the episcopate is a state of perfection higher than the religious state.[1] Christ himself, our great high-priest, came down from heaven not to do his own will but the will of him that sent him.[2] The principle of obedience to authority which all Catholics hold so dear, and which is the despair and the envy of non-Catholic sects, finds its highest expression in the subordination of all the personal preferences of the individual priest to the will of his bishop. In the graver issues, a bishop's authority over all the clergy of the diocese can be secured by applying the sanctions and penalties of Canon Law, but if a priest desires to do permanent and lasting good in the cause of Christ, he must be prepared to obey the directions of his lawful superiors, in everything pertaining to the pastoral care of souls, not only in the letter but in the spirit. His obedience must be not merely an external conformity, but an internal and supernatural submission, by which he trains himself to see in the will of lawful authority the will of God. As far as is possible, the bishop tries to satisfy the legitimate preferences of the clergy ; but all the needs of a diocese have to be served, and an individual priest might find himself occasionally in most uncongenial surroundings. If he has valid and serious reasons for seeking a change, his request will receive a sympathetic hearing ; but he must always be prepared to remain where he is sent and do what he is told, should he be so directed ; without this willingness it can be predicted that his priestly life will not be a happy one, nor his work for souls fruitful.

In order that a cleric should be able to enjoy the

[1] See p. 179.
[2] John v, 6.

necessaries of life, the Church requires, on the reception of the subdiaconate, an adequate guarantee concerning his support. This is called the 'title' of ordination. It may take the form of a private income known as 'patrimony,' or in Catholic countries the possession of a 'benefice.' But the commonest title is based on the future service of the diocese for which he is ordained. He finds, that is to say, the material means of his support in the offerings of the faithful, according to the command of Christ.[1] He may experience, at times, the extremes of poverty and need, but as a rule he is supported adequately in decent and reasonable comfort. Even though occasion offered a surplus wealth of ecclesiastical revenue, the priest cannot grow rich thereby. He is strictly bound by the law of the Church to apply this excess to religious and charitable purposes.

We have left, for our last consideration, an aspect of the priestly life which is so important that it often dominates every other priestly obligation. In offering himself for ordination, in the Western Church, the priest freely undertakes to lead a celibate life. S. Paul recommends virginity as a counsel of perfection, and it is because the priestly state demands perfection that the Church requires the exercise of perfect chastity, on the part of those ordained to the priesthood, in order that, being freed from the ties of marriage, the priest may become 'solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God.'[2] This law is not a harsh one, since no man is bound to become a priest unless he wishes to, and there are certain secular professions which demand a celibate life, at least for a time, as in certain grades of the army. The observance of the obligation is, naturally speaking, difficult and in some cases may be so

[1] 1 Cor. ix, 14.
[2] 1 Cor. vii, 32.

overwhelmingly difficult as to make it inadvisable to accept the priesthood.[1] But it is made easy if habits of chastity are acquired in youth, and the sacramental grace of Holy Orders will support and strengthen the weakness of human nature. The priest is required to make a great sacrifice in foregoing the happiness of married life, but he is also freed from the anxieties of that state. Bearing in mind all the activities of the priesthood and the fact that a priest has to be 'all things to all men in order to gain all,' it is certainly true that married life would be a hindrance to the efficient exercise of the priestly office. There would also be the danger of the priesthood becoming an hereditary caste. But mere expediency is not the chief purpose of the Church in requiring perfect chastity from priests. The real reason is that the priest will devote his life more entirely and completely to the service of God, if he is freed from human ties. The rule of celibacy was gradually introduced, and it has, for many centuries, taken the form of constituting Holy Orders a diriment impediment to marriage. In order to strengthen his will in observing the obligation he has voluntarily assumed, the subdeacon takes an implicit vow of chastity at his ordination. The obligation of celibacy in the priesthood is an ecclesiastical law, over which the Church possesses the radical power of dispensation, yet, owing to the extreme gravity of the issue, the Church never dispenses this law for the private good of any individual. The influence of a priest in the world is undoubtedly strengthened from the fact that he is leading a life of voluntary chastity, not through a selfish desire to avoid the burdens and responsibilities of marriage, but in obedience to the voice of Christ speaking through the Church.

The life of a secular priest is not an easy care-free

[1] Cf. p. 91.

existence. But, for one who is prepared to devote himself to the service of God, it can be and is, in the vast majority of cases, the happiest life on earth. It comprises the harmonious union of active and intellectual pursuits. The priest is brought daily into the most intimate contact with numbers of people who revere his office and respect the person who holds it. He has the opportunity of acquiring the most precious of all good things, the friendship of earnest and devoted laity. The common aims and the common difficulties of his brethren in the priesthood so unite them all, that it will be due solely to his own fault if he ever lacks the sympathy and assistance of his fellow-priests. But, looking beyond the small horizon of this world, the life of a priest is manifestly steeped in the supernatural. By turning all his energies to the service of God, and by using his priestly office for the salvation of men, his life has all the elements which contribute to the highest degree of perfection, the union between the contemplative and the active life.[1] Subject as he is to the laws of the Church in nearly every detail of his life, and to the direction of episcopal authority in everything pertaining to his pastoral office, he has the completest certainty of being conformed to the will of God and to his guiding Providence. His life is a replica, more or less vivid, of the life of Christ in whose priesthood he shares, and to whose grace he trusts for bringing to completion the work begun by the vocation of God who called him to the priesthood.

[1] Cf. p. 150, and Note C, p. 231.

CHAPTER IV

VOCATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD

§ 1

'NEITHER doth any man take the honour to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was. So Christ also did not glorify himself that he might be made a high-priest: but he that said unto him: Thou art my Son; this day I have begotten thee. As he saith also in another place: Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech.'[1] The divine plan for our redemption entailed a supreme sacrificial act, by which Christ offered himself to his father as a propitiation for the sins of the world. In this priesthood it has pleased Christ Our Lord to associate other men, who, by the character of the sacrament of Holy Orders, share in the priesthood of Christ, offering his eternal sacrifice and forgiving sins in his name.

The offering of due worship and sacrifice to God is natural to human creatures, and is a fundamental and elementary duty of religion. But God has revealed to men the way in which he desires to be worshipped. He has determined its nature and it is the duty of man to obey. The smallest details of the sacrificial worship of the Old Testament, a shadow of the good things to come, were scrupulously observed because they were prescribed

[1] Heb. v, 4–6; Ps. ii, 7; Ps. cix, 4.

by God. With much more reason, therefore, does the Church jealously preserve the will of Christ in everything concerned with the sacrifice of the New Law. It is pleasing and acceptable to God because it is the sacrifice God himself has designed. A sacrifice requires a sacrificial priesthood and, for substantially the same reasons requiring men to worship God in the way he desires, the choice of the priesthood is the choice of God.

In his dealings with men God makes known his will in various ways. The priesthood of the Old Law was a figure and a foreshadowing of the priesthood of Christ, but nothing is more striking in the Old Testament than the intervention of God in its choice. The tribe of Levi was set apart for his service ;[1] the priesthood belonged to the family of Aaron, himself a descendant of Levi ;[2] the high priesthood descended from Aaron by primogeniture ;[3] ' He exalted Aaron . . . He made an everlasting covenant with him, and gave him the priesthood of the nation, and made him blessed in glory . . . He chose him out of all men living, to offer a sacrifice to God.'[4] Christ himself, the high-priest of the New Law, was called by God to the priestly office. How much more, then, is it necessary for the human beings who share his priesthood to be divinely chosen for the privilege ? Their powers are conferred upon them by an external sacramental rite, instituted by Christ, which impresses upon their souls a ' character ' configuring them to his priesthood. For their priestly function is a vicarious one, and has no value whatever apart from the priesthood of Christ. For reasons deeply rooted in the concept of priesthood, and especially in

[1] Num. iii, 12 ; viii, 17.
[2] Exod. xxx, 23–30.
[3] Num. xx, 22–29.
[4] Ecclus. xlv, 7, 20.

its vicarious nature under the New Law, no man may take the honour to himself but must be called to it. A priest is the coadjutor of God,[1] the dispenser of his mysteries,[2] the ambassador of Christ,[3] teaching in his name.[4] All these prerogatives and, above all, the two-fold power of offering the sacrifice of Christ[5] and forgiving sins in his name,[6] presuppose and take for granted the divine initiative.

Christ, as during his earthly life, continues to choose the men who are to be associated with him in his priestly office : ' He called unto him whom he would.'[7] Whether it is the call of the Apostles or of the seventy-two disciples ;[8] whether the call is given by the voice of Christ in the flesh, as in the case of Peter and Andrew his brother,[9] or by the voice of the risen Christ, as in the case of S. Paul ;[10] whether the call of Christ speaking through his Church is ratified in a special manner, as in the election of Barnabas,[11] or with no extraordinary intervention, as in S. Paul's choice of Timothy ;[12] in every case it is a divine vocation. ' All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Christ ; and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.'[13]

In the course of our inquiry it will be necessary to examine more closely the way in which God manifests his choice, in selecting souls for the grace of the priesthood. But, for the moment, the necessity of a divine call has to be stressed and underlined, lest the more detailed analysis of all that it implies should in any way minimise the supreme importance of the divine vocation.

[1] 1 Cor. iii, 9.
[2] 1 Cor. iv, 1.
[3] 2 Cor. v, 20.
[4] Matt. xxviii, 19, 20.
[5] Luke xxii, 19.
[6] John xx, 23.
[7] Mark iii, 13.
[8] Matt. x ; Luke x.
[9] Matt. iv, 18–20.
[10] Gal. i, 15.
[11] Acts i, 24.
[12] Acts xvi, 3.
[13] 2 Cor. v, 18.

On the necessity of a call from God, before undertaking the office of priesthood, there has never been any obscurity or misunderstanding; the truth is manifest from the Holy Scriptures, from the writings of the Fathers, from the laws of the Church[1] and, above all, in the common belief and persuasion of the faithful throughout the world. It is only when we turn our minds to a more accurate appreciation of the method, by which God may be considered to express his will, that certain discussions and differences of opinion may arise. And even these differences are chiefly theoretical. But, as to the necessity of a divine vocation to the priesthood, there can be no doubt whatever, and it is with this radical doctrine that we are, at the moment, concerned.

The word 'vocation' as applied to the priesthood has a signification all its own. We often use the word loosely for expressing any walk in life for which a person has the taste and the aptitude, and which eventually he chooses as a profession; but, in the case of the priesthood, the choice is from God. 'You have not chosen me but I have chosen you.'[2]

Even where it is a question of joining some religious order, whose members are not priests, the word 'vocation' is not used in a completely univocal sense. There are points of resemblance, and it is the tendency amongst theological writers to approximate the rules governing vocation to the priesthood and vocation to the religious life. Ultimately the two things are distinct. The Church requires on the part of a candidate desiring to enter the religious life, profession of the Catholic faith, right intention and capabilities proportioned to the obligations about to be assumed.[3] The equivalent is also required

[1] Cf. Canons 1353; 1357, § 2.
[2] John xv, 16.
[3] Canon 538.

for the priesthood but in addition a divine vocation,[1] thus sanctioning the altogether special use of the word as applied, through centuries of tradition, to the divine call to the priesthood. The Code has, in fact, not one mention of ' vocation ' as applied to the religious life.[2] The reason why no special divine vocation, in the strict sense of the word, is required for the religious life is that God calls all Christians to be perfect and invites all, who are willing, to aspire to perfection by the means offered in religion, which are most useful but not necessary for the attainment of perfection.[3] As a general proposition, therefore, anyone may decline these means just as anyone may decline the priesthood, without committing any sin. Similarly, anyone who is properly disposed may choose these means of perfection, without undue preoccupation as to whether he is being specially called by God to do so. Certainly, in every case, the choice is made under the inspiration of divine grace and is an effect, in time, of that eternal providence of God which stretches from end to end mightily and disposes all things sweetly. But a ' vocation,' in the strict and proper sense in which we are speaking of it as applied to the priesthood, is not necessary.

In the priesthood, however, a man is the ambassador of Christ, and the dispenser of the mysteries of God ; by the priestly character he is intimately united to the person of Christ and acts in his name ; he becomes a priest chiefly for the salvation of others. For each and all of these reasons he must be specially chosen by God. Every citizen, in the exercise of his profession, furthers the

[1] Canons 1353, 1357.

[2] ' Codex jur. can. enumerans conditiones requisitas pro admissione in statum religiosum . . . altum silentium tenet de vocatione divina.' Prümmer, *Manuale Juris Eccles.*, Q. 200. Cf. also Balmes, *Les religieux à voeux simples*, p. 102.

[3] See *infra*, p. 149.

good of the State and upholds the prerogatives of his sovereign. But ministers, legates and ambassadors are specially chosen for the office, and their whole power and value turns, not on their personal merits, but on the fact that they are the chosen representatives of the supreme authority of the State. We are all children of God and fellow-citizens with the saints. Amongst those citizens some are chosen for the office of the priesthood ; they are placed in the hierarchy of the Church and, by that fact, enjoy a pre-eminence and dignity which is in no way due to their personal merits, but solely because they share in the priesthood of Christ. For this they need a special vocation from God.

Moreover, as a necessary consequence of the essential and traditional concepts concerning the divine origin of the priestly vocation, grave sin would be committed on the part of the subject who sought ordination without a vocation, as well as on the part of the ordaining bishop who was aware of this defect. ' Impose not hands lightly upon any man, neither be made partakers of other men's sins.'[1] This means that it is sinful to proceed to the priesthood in cases where the ordinary signs of divine vocation are lacking. Of these signs we shall speak more fully in the next chapter. The sin consists in the presumption betrayed in seeking a dignity to which one is not called, in the imprudence of undertaking an office without the necessary qualifications, and in the rashness of exposing one's own self to the possibility of grave sin through the inadequate profession of the priestly life.

Election to the priesthood is, therefore, a special call of God. The word ' vocation ' itself, in its primary usage, bears an active sense in classical literature, e.g. a citation to a court of justice, and even in English it

[1] 1 Tim. v, 22. S. Alphonsus, *Theol. Moral.*, VI, 803.

could be properly used of any active ' call.'[1] This English use is now obsolete, but the word is still often used to express a person's occupation or profession in life, although, in this meaning, the sense of responding to a definite call is almost completely absent. The commonest meaning of the word is restricted almost entirely to the religious sense, and under a two-fold aspect. It expresses the fact or condition of a person called by God to some office of a spiritual nature : thus, we speak of a young man ' having ' a vocation or ' losing ' his vocation. But the important thing to remember is that this very common use of the word in the passive sense necessarily implies its primary and active meaning, namely, the action of God so calling, and the two cannot be separated.[2] It is solely in this special sense that the word is used in this book. Owing to the poverty of language the one word ' vocation ' must be employed for denoting the ' active ' call of God as well as the ' passive ' state or condition of the person called. It is clear that one sense cannot exist apart from the other, and the precise meaning will always be clear from the context.[3]

The priestly vocation is the special disposition of divine providence, by which God freely chooses certain men for his service in the priesthood, bestowing upon them the necessary

[1] Cf. Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. ' vocation ' : 5. ' The action of summoning an assembly or its members.' 3. ' A call to a public position.'

[2] In the New Testament the word ' vocation,' which we are accustomed to use almost exclusively of the priesthood or the religious life, bears more commonly the meaning of divine election to the state of Grace (cf. 1 Cor. i, 9 ; Eph. i, 18 ; iv, 1), both in the primary active sense, and also in the passive sense denoting the condition of persons so called. In its active form it is used also for the call to the Apostolate (e.g. Matt. x, 1 ; Mark iii, 13).

[3] Mulders, *La Vocation au Sacerdoce*, p. 5.

qualities and graces for that purpose, and manifesting his choice through the legitimate authority of his Church on earth. Each of the elements composing this definition must now be examined. Dominating the whole concept of vocation to the priesthood is the will and providence of God which is our peace. When God chooses a man for a particular office in life, he gives him all the qualities and graces necessary for its proper exercise. It is by a careful scrutiny of the candidate's dispositions that the signs of a divine call can be detected. The series of divine graces, which have fitted a candidate for the priesthood with the necessary qualities and intention, reach their consummation in the call of the Church. Until this call is given, no one can be *certain* of a divine vocation. It completes and crystallises all the various elements which go to make a priest, and is rightly considered the only sure indication of the divine will.

Dr. Jowett has written a book of guidance for Nonconformist ministers in which his concept of vocation to the ministry is thus explained : ' In all genuine callings to the Ministry there is a sense of Divine initiative, a solemn communication of the Divine Will, a mysterious feeling of commission which leaves a man no alternative, but which sets him in the road of his vocation bearing the ambassage of a servant and instrument of the eternal God.'[1] The description would be a true definition of vocation to the priesthood but for one vital omission : the intervention of the Church as the mouthpiece of God. The Son of God in founding a Church lives in it, the Body of Christ, and speaks through it. There is divine initiative in the call to the priestly state, operating in all the mysterious designs of the providence of God, but the subject who believes himself called must remain in doubt until the divine will is manifested through the

[1] *The Preacher*, p. 14.

Church : ' He that heareth you heareth me.'[1] To one who is thus called there is a feeling of commission, mysterious indeed, but as clear and determined as when the Apostles listened to the voice of Christ, ' Go ye and teach all nations.'[2] There is the consciousness of being an ambassador of Christ and an instrument of the eternal God, because the commission is given by that authority to whom Christ said ' as the living Father has sent me I also send you.'[3]

This doctrine may appear, at first sight, to be lacking in precision. One might expect the will of God, in choosing the priesthood, to be so clearly expressed that nothing further should be required on the part of the Church. Or one might expect the choice of the Church to be so infallibly secure that, everywhere and always, candidates are acceptable to God from the fact of that choice. But, on reflection, it will be seen that, owing to man's most precious gift of free will, there must necessarily be interaction between human initiative and divine grace. The priesthood is refused by some who appear to be eminently suited for that state of life. It is eagerly sought by others who appear altogether unfitted. God has allowed the authorities of the Church to be sometimes deceived in the choice of candidates, who show by their lives that they should never have entered the ranks of the clergy. In substance the problem is only one aspect of the larger issue concerning Grace and Free Will. God has designed certain men to be priests, and it is due to the divine will that they are led gradually to the altar and are chosen by the Church. It is also due to the fact that they have freely co-operated with the divine guidance. A document of great antiquity, known as the Canons of Hippolytus,

[1] Luke x, 16.
[2] Matt. xxviii, 19.
[3] John xx, 21.

describes a primitive ordination rite in which the following words are solemnly uttered by the people over the chosen candidate: 'O Deus, corrobora hunc quem nobis praeparasti,' 'Strengthen, O God, this man, whom thou hast prepared for us.'[1] This early rite exactly expresses the action of God in the choice of a priest. He is prepared by divine providence and elected by the Church.

§ 2

'God by his providence watches over and governs everything that he has made, stretching from end to end mightily and disposing all things sweetly.'[2] Just as the ruler of a State directs everything to the end or purpose of the State, so does God direct the whole universe, and in particular the souls of men, towards the end for which they were created. The end of man is a supernatural one, consisting in the vision of God face to face. In everything that pertains to the possession of this supernatural end God, in his providence, guides the soul of man by grace, inspiring his actions and assisting their completion. If we cannot even say the name 'Jesus' except by the Holy Ghost,[3] how much more necessary is a divine inspiration for moving a person towards the unique and supernatural union with Christ in the priestly character. If 'no man can come to me except the Father who sent me draw him,'[4] still less can

[1] 'In ea autem hebdomade, in qua ordinatur, dicat populus: nos eligimus eum. Deinde silentio facto in toto grege postea omnes pro eo orent dicentes: "O Deus, corrobora hunc quem nobis praeparasti."' Duchesne, *Origines du Culte Chrétien*, 2nd ed., p. 505.

[2] Council of Trent, Session III, cap. 1.

[3] 1 Cor. xii, 3.

[4] John vi, 44.

any man lawfully reach that state, whose prerogative it is to lead other souls to God, unless drawn thereto by the grace of God. In the case of every aspirant to the priesthood the hand of God can be detected, whether in the various circumstances of his life, which seem to lead him towards it, or in those endowments of body and mind which are a necessary condition for its due exercise. In some cases there exists a perceptible feeling or attraction towards the priesthood, perhaps in a subject so circumstanced as to make such an impulsion almost inexplicable from every human point of view. But this attraction, though often present, is neither necessary nor an infallible sign of divine vocation until it is ratified by the Church.[1] What we are insisting on now is that in the series of steps, beginning with the desire for the priesthood and ending with a canonical election at the call of the bishop, the first movement throughout is from God.

The exercise of the priestly function is, like the duties of any other state of life, the test and measure of the priest's personal salvation. But he does not become a priest, primarily, for the purpose of saving his own soul, but for the perfection of others. The office has an external social and public value, and for that reason requires the external and public call of the Church, the authority of God on earth. But this certain doctrine, and the prominence which it has received in recent discussions,[2] must not be allowed to obscure in our minds the equally certain doctrine concerning the constant divine intervention in the call to the priesthood, not only as manifested in the call of the Church given to suitable subjects, but also in the whole process by which certain individuals are found to be endowed with the necessary qualities and rightness of intention. ' Such confidence we have through Christ

[1] Cf. p. 97.
[2] See Note A.

towards God. Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves ; but our sufficiency is from God. *Who also hath made us fit ministers of the new testament*, not in the letter but in the spirit. For the letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth.'[1] God has, from all eternity, designed certain men for the priesthood, and this divine will in their regard is manifested, in time, by a special providence shaping their lives, and directing their steps towards the altar. A candidate may not, for years, be conscious of this fact ; nor, on the other hand, does the consciousness of what is believed to be the will of God give any right to ordination until the call is given by the Church. But the divine intervention is always present, and the whole weight of tradition in the Church testifies to its existence.[2]

From the shape, texture and qualities of a vessel, we can know the purpose for which it has been made. Similarly, in trying to come to a decision regarding the divine will and providence of God in electing a subject to the priesthood, we can be guided by that subject's qualities and dispositions. In a matter of such moment, and fraught with such consequences for the good of the Church, we should naturally expect that the minimum standard has been very carefully defined and established in the laws and traditions of the Church. ' That a candidate may be rightly called by a Bishop nothing further is required than a right intention together with suitability for the office, namely, a fitness resulting from certain endowments of Grace and nature, evident in the rectitude of his life and the degree of his knowledge, and giving rise to a well-founded hope that he will be able worthily to fulfil the functions of the priesthood and sacredly to observe its obligations.'[3]

[1] 2 Cor. iii, 4–6.
[2] Cf. Mulders, *La Vocation au Sacerdoce*, p. 9 *seq.*
[3] Note A, § 1.

In the next chapter these qualities, the first beginnings of which the Code regards as the seeds of vocation, will be examined more closely. For the moment it is necessary to observe two things. In the first place although vocation, in the strict and full sense of the word, is not certainly established until the call of the Church is canonically given, yet there is a sense in which the word ' vocation ' may be applied to a youth who has the necessary intention and qualities in proportion to his age and circumstances. It is what the Code calls the seed, ' germen,' of vocation, in placing upon the bishop and others the obligation of fostering it and developing its growth.[1]

The second thing to remember is that the existence of this seed, this incipient vocation, is due to God's planting. Its growth may be traced to a multiplicity of causes. God, who is the first cause of all movements, of nature as well as of grace, acts upon our souls through the co-operation of secondary causes. It is a fact which stands out throughout the history of his dealings with men in the Old and New Testament in a variety of ways, and it needs to be remembered especially in the present connection. The necessity of a call from God, before one can approach the priesthood, would be almost nugatory, were we to fail in detecting the intervention of God in everything leading a candidate towards the altar. At the most, that divine call would be restricted to canonical election on the part of the authority of the Church. Yet, in the past, men have been validly ordained priests by a bishop, although they have been lacking in the requisite qualities. It was in many ways the chief work of the Council of Trent, in its disciplinary measures, to eradicate this abuse, and the fathers rightly deplored the admission into the ranks of the priesthood of unworthy subjects, of men—as we should express it—who have no divine vocation.

[1] Canons 1353, 1357.

For, unlike the qualities necessary for the prudent choice of any other avocation in life, those required as a condition for ordination include elements of a supernatural character: sanctity of life and rightness of intention. Their origin is, therefore, to be traced to the intervention of God's grace. Since vocation to the priesthood comes from God, the effect of the divine call on the person elected is to endow him with the necessary qualities and dispositions for the office to which he is destined, provided his own free will places no obstacle to the divine operation. 'Whenever divine grace elects a person to some singular favour or exalted office, all the gifts necessary for that office are copiously granted to him. This general rule applies to every divine favour communicated to rational creatures.'[1] If a candidate does not possess these qualities, at least in proportion to his years, the conclusion is that he is not being called by God to the priesthood.

But would it not be correct to say that every profession and career in life is subject to the same identical governing of divine providence? God is drawing all men to their final end which is a supernatural one, and every work and position in life has some influence, under the providence of God, in enabling a person to work out his salvation. Everything that has been said about the preparation of subjects for the priesthood is certainly true, but does it not apply equally to any other career in life? Accordingly, is there any need to require in a candidate for the priesthood any special intervention of God, apart from the choice of the Church?[2]

This point of view is important and, in fact, represents the extreme opinion brought into prominence by recent

[1] S. Bernardine of Siena, *Brev. Rom.*, lect. 4, 'In Solemnitate S. Joseph.'

[2] Cf. *Rev. Apolog.*, X, p. 352.

discussions. If it is correct to view the matter in this light, then the idea of divine vocation must be restricted, completely and entirely, to the canonical call of the Church, to the exclusion of any other interior working of the Holy Spirit in the soul of the candidate, beyond that which is ordinarily present in the life of any Christian serving God with fidelity in the career he has chosen for himself. This may be defended as the true doctrine and it certainly has the advantage of an attractive simplicity. But there are many grave and weighty reasons which lead one to reject it. It lessens the sacredness of the divine vocation to the priesthood, and derogates somewhat from the reverence due to such a sublime call from God.

Without for a moment minimising the absolute necessity of an external call on the part of the authority of the Church, it is equally necessary to remember that ecclesiastical laws refer to a ' divine vocation,' in candidates for the priesthood, years before a canonical call to Orders is possible. The truth is that both the internal movement of God and the external call of the Church are necessary, but the latter is visible and perceptible whereas a candidate may be altogether unconscious of the former. To stress either of these elements to the exclusion of the other would appear to be erroneous. There is no divine vocation unless the call of the Church is present, nor does the call of the Church constitute a divine vocation, unless it is given to one whom divine providence has prepared by endowing him with the necessary qualities and right intention. In the whole progress of our souls towards God, so finely analysed by S. Thomas, we are directed externally by law and moved internally by divine grace. Institutional religion without personal intimate union between the soul and God is a dry, legal, mechanical system, utterly foreign to the spirit of the gospel. On the other hand, a reliance on

the individual aspirations of the soul towards God, without the sanction and guidance of divinely constituted visible authority, is the kernel of Protestantism. It would seem that the true theory of vocation to the priesthood shares in this accepted concept, which unifies the action of internal grace and external law. There is an internal movement of God on the soul, of which it is not necessary for the subject to be conscious. There is also the external call of ecclesiastical authority decisively completing the notion of ' vocation.' Both are equally necessary and if a person is ordained, lacking the one or the other, he enters not through the door but as a thief.[1] The external canonical call would scarcely ever be lacking in a valid ordination, except in the few extremely curious instances of Protestants who seek ordination from a schismatical bishop. The internal call, which is equally necessary for a divine vocation, can only be perceived by a careful examination of a subject's intentions and qualities.

Hence, the difference between the priestly vocation and any other career to which a person feels inclined. In every other case the ordinary providence of God so rules our lives that some engage in one profession, some in another, each according to his own will and good pleasure. Each makes his choice according to the ordinary rules of prudence. But for the priesthood much more is necessary, for the Scriptures and Tradition assert that it is a divine vocation. In God's plan, the call is manifested, finally and decisively, in the external call of the Church, but it is preceded by the internal election of God. His Providence endows the persons he chooses for the office with the requisite natural qualities, his Holy Spirit inspires them to desire the priesthood with a right intention, and his Grace assists them to attain the necessary degree of sanctity.

[1] John x, 1.

§3

What obligation exists for a person who is thus called to the priesthood? Is he free to reject the invitation without committing any kind of sin? It may be said at the outset that the case would arise only very rarely. What people might take to be a refusal to accept the call from God is, in the majority of cases, merely a decision arrived at, after careful deliberation, that the call is not really present, owing to the lack of necessary qualities, inadequate intention, or even the existence of other grave obligations inconsistent with the priestly life. But suppose, for the sake of precision, that a person has all the necessary endowments and, in the judgement of everyone, will make an excellent priest; yet he refuses to proceed to ordination, whether it be from laudable motives of humility or from the lack of sufficient generosity. The law of the Church prohibits anyone, even the bishop, from forcing Holy Orders on an unwilling subject, whatever may be the method or motive.[1] The ordination rite takes for granted that the subject is perfectly free to withdraw if he desires to do so. This is especially noticeable in the conferring of the subdiaconate: 'You must attentively consider the burden which you are to-day seeking of your own choice. For as yet you are free, and it is lawful for you, if you wish, to pass over to worldly pursuits . . . while there is yet time, think upon it; and if you wish to abide by your holy resolution, in the name of the Lord come hither.'[2]

[1] 'Quovis modo ob quamvis rationem,' Canons 971; 973, § 2; 2352.

[2] 'Considerare debetis, quod onus hodie ultro appetitis. Hactenus enim liberi etsis, licetque vobis pro arbitrio ad saecularia vota transire . . . dum tempus est cogitate, et, si in sancto proposito perseverare placet, in nomine Domini huc accedite.' *Pontif. Rom.*

In itself, therefore, the act of declining to accept a vocation to the priesthood is perfectly lawful, whether one uses the word ' vocation ' as something anterior to the call of the Church, or whether it is taken in the complete sense of canonical election. For it is an invitation from God, not a commandment under pain of sin. Nevertheless, it might possibly happen in some cases that the motive urging one to refuse has some element of venial sin in it.[1] If there is sin committed in declining, it must be sought in this motive, e.g. laziness. If no such sinful element enters into the motive of refusal there is no sin at all on this score. But one cannot help reflecting that in declining a state of life to which a person appears to be divinely called, he is declining also all the graces which God would grant enabling him to fulfil his obligations worthily. Perhaps in another state of life the equivalent graces will not be given so generously. It must always be, therefore, a matter for most serious reflection to decline a clear vocation to the priesthood, especially when a young man has advanced very considerably towards ordination. But, apart from the question of motive, there is no sin in so doing, and a withdrawal is nearly always not a refusal at all but the result of discovering that no vocation exists.

But, if there is no sin in a personal refusal, the same cannot be said of dissuading a youth from proceeding to the priesthood, when he appears to have all the signs of a divine vocation. Here again, one must come to a judgement very warily ; for what might appear to be an indefensible interference with the divine call, may be, in reality, proper guidance by persons of maturer judgement who rightly perceive that no vocation exists. Apart from this necessary reservation, parents or relatives who

[1] Cf. Genicot, *Theol. Moral.*, II, § 25.

interfere with a well-established intention of seeking the priesthood may very easily commit grave sin. Freedom of choice is absolute in a subject called, but other persons by persuading a youth to reject the divine invitation are interfering with the designs of God. It is not their own happiness and comfort which is at stake but the good of the Church at large, and who can say the harm resulting to souls by depriving the world even of one priest, especially in days when most dioceses need priests to do the necessary work of the Church? Therefore, the same canon, which forbids persons to force an unwilling subject into the priesthood, also forbids anyone to dissuade a suitable subject from accepting it.[1]

Happily, however, the seeds of divine vocation usually fall on good ground. It is from good Catholic homes that the Church expects and secures vocations to the priesthood, and the subject called usually finds himself surrounded from infancy by persons who support and encourage his vocation. This also is part of the scheme of divine providence. Parents and others, who assist the development of a desire for the priesthood in the young under their care, may be quite certain that, in so doing, they are the special instruments of God, who rules and governs inferiors by superiors, not because his own power is defective, but out of the abundance of his goodness in order to communicate to them the dignity which belongs to himself as the first cause.[2]

§ 4

In what we have said concerning the meaning and genesis of vocation anterior to the call of the Church,

[1] Canon 971.
[2] Cf. Mulders, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

there has been lacking a certain and decisive manifestation of the divine origin of the summons. The qualities of the candidate offer useful material which enables one to incline to a decision, especially where it is a question of endowments of body and mind which can easily be tested in the external forum. Above all, the *right intention* of the aspirant to the priesthood offers an indication as sure and stable as any that can be expected in human affairs : but it is an indication to the truth of which no one can attest, except the conscience of the person and God. The same is true, to a large extent, in deciding whether a candidate's moral life and personal sanctity justify the desire for the priesthood, except that the confessor is able, in this matter, to offer a discreet and careful judgement ; but even the confessor's judgement is confined entirely to the internal forum, and he is forbidden, under the gravest penalties, to betray the confidence of the penitent in any way, even when he is manifestly unsuited for the priestly life.

Where is a *decisive* judgement and definite call to the priesthood to be found ? Not in what is believed to be an internal call of God, at least as a necessary or ordinary criterion ; not in the dispositions of the subject, good moral life and adequate knowledge, for these can, and usually do, exist in persons who have no intention whatever of seeking the priesthood ; not even in the right intention, although this is believed to be inspired by God, for it is possible to have such an intention and yet be unqualified on other grounds. The decisive sign of divine vocation is in the external call of ecclesiastical authority, given, after careful and mature judgement, to those who have the necessary dispositions and the right intention of serving God in the priesthood.

This has always been the traditional doctrine and practice of the Church, obscured though it was for a time by

theories of vocation which placed all the stress on the internal drawing of the Holy Spirit. For there is this difference between Holy Orders and the other sacraments of the New Law. The six were instituted for the sanctification of the recipient, but Holy Orders primarily for the sanctification of others. The priesthood is, therefore, a public function, and the number and quality of men to be ordained is determined by the needs of the Church. No man has any right to ordination,[1] whereas any Christian who is properly disposed has a right to the other sacraments, e.g. absolution can neither be refused nor deferred if the penitent is properly contrite and asks for absolution.[2]

The public and social character of the office calls for the intervention of external authority. The vocation of Aaron is put before us, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as the type and exemplar of the divine call to the priesthood. 'Neither doth any man take the honour to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was.'[3] But it was Moses, the recognised leader of Israel, who was instructed by God to elevate Aaron and his sons to the priestly office. 'The Lord spoke to Moses saying: thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons and shalt sanctify them that they may do the office of priesthood unto me.'[4] God would not have chosen for the office a subject who was not endowed with the proper dispositions, and divine grace prepared the way interiorly in his soul, but the call to the priesthood was uttered, clearly and decisively, through the voice of external authority, not through an internal admonition.

[1] Council of Trent, Session XXIII, cap. 16; Note A, § 1, Card. Commission, July 1st, 1912; Canon 969.
[2] Canon 886.
[3] Heb. v, 4.
[4] Exod. xxx, 30.

The Apostles, engaged in fishing, certainly had no internal inspiration to follow Christ; they heard the voice of the master: 'Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men.'[1] They themselves, in their turn calling and ordaining the hierarchy of the Church, were not intent on discovering men already inspired internally by God. They chose from amongst the faithful suitably endowed subjects: 'Look ye out among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.'[2] S. Paul chose Timothy using his own judgement as to his fitness, and urges him to do the same thing with regard to others.[3] In no case did they require a settled internal conviction of a divine inspiration, but only fitness for the office and willingness to accept it. Deacons must be 'chaste, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre, holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience.'[4] A bishop must be the 'steward of God, not proud, not subject to anger, not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but given to hospitality, gentle, sober, just, holy, continent.'[5]

This has always been the traditional doctrine and practice of the Church, nowhere more clearly evidenced than within the ordination rite of the Roman Pontifical. 'While there is yet time, think upon it; and if you wish to abide by your holy resolution, in the name of the Lord come hither.'[6] 'By the help of our Lord God, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, we choose these sub-

[1] Matt. iv, 19.
[2] Acts vi, 2.
[3] Acts xvi, 1–3; 2 Tim. ii, 2; Titus i, 5.
[4] 1 Tim. iii, 8.
[5] Titus i, 7, 8; 1 Tim. iii, 1.
[6] 'Proinde, dum tempus est cogitate, et, si in sancto proposito perseverare placet, in nomine Domini huc accedite.' (Ordination of Subdeacons.)

deacons here present for the order of the Diaconate.'[1] 'Pour forth, O Lord, upon these thy servants, whom we now set apart for the dignity of the priesthood, the grace of thy blessing.'[2]

The candidates must have the requisite qualities of nature and grace, and the bishop makes a solemn inquiry with regard to this, before proceeding to call them to ordination, but there is no trace of an inquiry concerning an interior divine call, except only that which is manifested by the possession of the requisite qualities and right intention. If, in the will of Christ, the sublime *powers* of the priesthood are conferred through the instrumentality of the ordaining bishop, why should not the lesser function of decisively *choosing* certain men for the office be also in the power of the bishop, representing the authority of the Church ?

The XXIIIrd Session of the Council of Trent deals entirely with the sacrament of Holy Orders, in all its aspects. If an interior call or inspiration of God were judged necessary in one called to the priesthood, it was in this place that the Council would have set forth the doctrine. The Council stresses throughout only the qualities required in a candidate. 'The Bishop calling to his assistance priests, and other prudent persons, well skilled in the divine law, and of experience in the constitutions of the Church, shall diligently investigate and examine the parentage, person, age, education, morals, learning and faith of those to be ordained.'[3]

[1] 'Auxiliante Domino Deo, et Salvatore nostro Jesu Christo, eligimus hos praesentes subdiaconos in ordinem Diaconii.' (Ordination of Deacons.)

[2] 'Tu, Domine, super hos famulos tuos, quos ad Presbyterii honorem dedicamus, munus tuae benedictionis infunde' (Ordination of Priests.)

[3] Council of Trent, Session XXIII, cap. 7.

Even for the priesthood there is no mention of any previous decisive call from God, in the sense of an internal inspiration; there is required only a greater degree of knowledge and virtue. They must be persons who have proved themselves to be capable of 'teaching the people those things which it is necessary for all to know unto salvation, as also fit to administer the sacraments; and so conspicuous for purity and chasteness of morals that a shining example of good works, and a lesson how to live may be expected from them.'[1] It is to the disciplinary reforms of Trent that we owe the inception of the existing system of Seminaries for ecclesiastical education. A long chapter is devoted to the training of candidates for the priesthood, a chapter which echoes the ordination rite. It leaves to the episcopate the choice of candidates from among those who have proved themselves worthy. The number admitted is to be limited 'according to the means and extent of the diocese.'[2] 'Those are said to be called by God who are called by the lawful ministers of the Church.'[3] The external authority of the Church, the representative of God on earth, is the only final and decisive source from which, under God, the call to the priesthood is given. If the Church has not this power, by what right are canonical 'irregularities' established, by which certain persons, even through no fault of their own, are excluded from the ranks of the priesthood?[4] By what right, too, unless the power is inherent in her constitution, has the Western Church insisted upon

[1] Council of Trent, Session XXIII, cap. xiv.

[2] *Ib.*, cap. xviii; Canons 969, 1363.

[3] 'Vocari autem a Deo dicuntur qui a legitimis Ecclesiae ministris vocantur.' *Catech. of the Council of Trent*, Part II, Ch. VII.

[4] Page 23 *supra.*

celibacy as a condition for ordination, requiring from subdeacons an implicit vow of chastity ?

The doctrinal reasons underlying the universal practice of the Church rest, primarily, on the fact that the Church is a visible society, though its object and scope is in the invisible and supernatural order. Grace, God's pardon to the sinner, the sacramental character of Orders, are all invisible, yet they are wrought through a visible channel. Mysterious and supernatural is the divine call to the priesthood : ' you have not chosen me but I have chosen you,'[1] yet it is expressed, finally and decisively, through the visible channel of ecclesiastical authority. There is no place here for subjective illusions and errors. Provided a candidate has not consciously deceived his superiors regarding his fitness for the office, and provided he approaches the priesthood with a right intention, he enjoys complete certainty, no matter how unworthy he may be, that in being called by the Church he is called by God as Aaron was. Although this doctrine does not exclude the direct and immediate call of God to the soul,[2] and although it certainly does not exclude the interior action of God upon the soul, in fitting candidates with the necessary qualities of body and mind, and in assisting them to form a right intention, the decisive and completing element in the priestly vocation is the call of the Church. In this respect is to be found the ultimate difference between the priesthood and other professions in life.

In the ordinary course of events, and in the normal circumstances of every vocation to the priesthood contemplated by the Church, the canonical election falls upon those subjects who, by divine providence, have the necessary qualities and right intention ; it also happens,

[1] John xv, 16.
[2] Cf. p. 97 *infra.*

commonly and normally, that the number of suitable candidates seeking canonical election are not refused by the Church. If they are not wanted in one diocese they are gladly accepted elsewhere.

The two elements, namely, the requirements of the internal forum and the external call of the Church, usually coincide harmoniously. But it would be inaccurate, though doubtless most desirable, to suppose that the two elements always and necessarily coincide. For, in the ways of God with men, there is the factor of human free will to consider. It is clearly possible for a candidate, lacking the necessary qualities and intention, to secure the canonical call of the Church, either by error or by deception. If he is called to the priesthood without any conscious deception on his part, he lawfully accepts the office; but, if his superiors and his bishop were deliberately deceived during his course of preparation, the deception is certainly grave sin,[1] since the obligations of the priesthood are being assumed by one who is unfit for the office. Moreover, the honour of the priesthood is being taken without a divine vocation, for the call of the Church has been obtained by one who is not designed by God for the office. There lies upon such a one the obligation of repairing the evil and fitting himself for the priesthood by acquiring the necessary qualities and dispositions, and above all by forming a right intention, which it is presumed was previously lacking; in a word, he is bound to acquire the qualities, after obtaining the priesthood, which normally would have been the signs of vocation before he was chosen by the Church.

The choice of the Aaronic priesthood by God, through Moses, differs from the method of divine election to the Christian priesthood. For in the case of Aaron God

[1] Cf. p. 131 *infra*.

revealed his choice to Moses. In the case of the Christian priesthood the choice lies indeed with the Church, which is guided by the providence of God in choosing fit subjects, but in the exercise of this prerogative the Church is not infallible, since it is an exercise of canonical authority, not a pronouncement concerning faith or morals. If it should seem unfitting that God should allow his Church to fall occasionally into the error of elevating unworthy men to the priesthood, we must remember that it has pleased God to work out his plans through human fallible channels. Should it appear a mysterious and insoluble problem, it is not a problem peculiar to the choice of the priesthood. Why has God allowed other evils to afflict the Church : for example, a double claimant to the papacy during the Great Schism of the West ; decline of fervour in religious Orders ; persecutions of the Church at various times ? All these evils are the will of God, only in the sense that he permits them to happen. So also, the canonical election of an unworthy subject to the priesthood is the will of God, in the sense that he allows the Church so to act ; only in this limited and imperfect sense has an unworthy ordinand a divine vocation. For there is required the call of the Church in every vocation, but, if that choice falls on one whom God has not fitted for the office, then it cannot be called a divine choice. Both internal fitness and the external canonical call are necessary.

In a similar manner, though the difficulty is far less acute, it may seem very possible that a candidate who appears fitted by nature and grace for the priesthood may be rejected by the Church. In the first place this eventuality, as a matter of calm fact, is an extremely rare occurrence. The Church has at all times needed priests. But it is the law of the Council of Trent, repeated in the Code, that the canonical choice of subjects is to be

determined by the needs of the diocese. It may happen, therefore, that in certain parts more candidates are forthcoming than the locality needs. They may be excellent subjects, but the bishop of a diocese is forbidden to ordain them unless he has need of them. The situation is fairly simple ; they can offer themselves to other bishops who are in need of priests. If a person feels a grievance in being rejected for his native diocese, and pleads the possession of the requisite qualities, including a right intention, one may be permitted to ask whether the intention of becoming a priest in the service of a diocese already well supplied is really a ' right ' intention.

We may repeat, therefore, that the theory of vocation, as we have described it, in tracing its origin partly to the internal and partly to the external forum, operates in practice in such a way that the Church gives the decisive summons, in the name of God, to those whom the Holy Spirit has prepared internally by his grace. The two elements normally coincide quite harmoniously. By seeking objections and difficulties, which are largely theoretical and imaginary, the stress may be thrown either on the internal call of God, evidenced in the qualities and intention of the subject, or on the external call of the Church.

There are, for example, cases in which the Church has urged an unwilling subject to accept the priesthood. Does it follow that in these cases the whole essence of divine vocation is in the call of the Church ? By no means. The subject is eminently fitted for an office which he has decided to refuse, perhaps from spiritual motives. Before he is actually ordained he changes his outlook, in obedience to the Church and out of regard for the great need of souls ; he then approaches the priesthood with the same intentions as anyone else. But, in his case, the genesis of the desire is traced to the

immediate intervention of the Church, instead of having arisen in an apparently fortuitous manner, through the education and environment of childhood. There is ample room in these days for a wider application of this method of securing suitable candidates; for the man who holds back from humility and reverence is, on many counts, more worthy than one who rushes in where angels fear to tread. It does not follow that, in these cases, the vocation is purely external through the medium of ecclesiastical authority; for the very fitness of a subject, which is so evident that the Church has definitely intervened, is itself the internal operation of God on the soul.

It has been necessary to insist on this point at some length, for the ecclesiastical commendation of Canon Lahitton's work, *La Vocation Sacerdotale*,[1] in which the necessity of an external call of the Church is stressed, led some to think that the divine call is from first to last to be placed in canonical election alone. But the author of the work, so justly commended by the Church as representing her traditional doctrine, had primarily in view the rejection of a theory of vocation which required an internal drawing of the Holy Spirit, sensibly perceived by the subject, and which had been wrongly regarded as the decisive and necessary sign of divine vocation. It was this erroneous view that the author rejected, by bringing into greater prominence the call of the Church as the only necessary and decisive sign. When this canonical summons is given to one who has not consciously deceived his superiors, that man is certain that his vocation is from God. If, in the course of his priestly life, discouragement and weariness tend to weigh down his soul, he might very easily be tempted to regard his earlier aspirations as an illusion, but when he reflects

[1] Cf. Note A.

that the Church has, under God, called him to this office, the possibility of a subjective illusion is removed. For the call of God came to him, on the day of his ordination, as clearly as the voice of Christ to the Apostles on the shores of the lake of Galilee.

There is a further point which can now be easily appreciated. It is the rôle of the confessor. On a principle which regarded the divine call as essentially an interior drawing of the Holy Spirit, it would be the business of the spiritual guide to use his discernment and experience of souls, in assuring a young man that he was being called by God to the priesthood. The confessor's office would be, on this hypothesis, extremely delicate and important. But, once granted that the internal inspiration is neither a necessary, nor a decisive, sign of vocation from God, the confessor or spiritual guide has rather a different office to fulfil. He has to assist a person who, let us suppose, is doubtful whether he has the requisite degree of sanctity and general fitness for the office ; he has to encourage young men to render themselves fit by the practices of the ascetical life in order to overcome bad habits ; he has to assist them in building up a strong foundation of moral virtue and of divine charity ; he has to help them to purify their intentions, and to desire the priesthood solely for the glory of God in the salvation of souls ; he may occasionally have to warn a penitent not to proceed to the priesthood, if he is clearly and evidently unfit. But his office is restricted entirely to the internal forum of Penance. The responsibility of calling subjects to the priesthood decisively and definitely, a call which, we repeat, is not from God unless it is given to worthy men, is not the confessor's. It belongs exclusively to the external authority of the Church. For this reason the confessor is forbidden to have any voice in the deliberations of the superiors of

a Seminary, who may be called upon to advise the bishop in the choice or rejection of candidates.

We have now to understand, in somewhat greater detail, the ordinary signs which reveal the presence of a divine vocation, and which the Church uses as a criterion in the choice of subjects.

CHAPTER V

THE SIGNS OF VOCATION

IF God is designing a soul for the priesthood, he will grant all the graces and qualities necessary for the proper exercise of the priestly office. These dispositions must be present as a *sine qua non* at the time of ordination, before a bishop can lawfully exercise his prerogative of calling a candidate in the name of the Church. The attainment of a minimum degree of fitness is obviously a gradual growth from the less perfect to the perfect. It would be unreasonable to expect to find it, in anything but a rudimentary fashion, in a youth just beginning his training for the priesthood. In this chapter, therefore, we are chiefly concerned with describing the qualities and dispositions of the ordinand as they should be found, at least as a minimum, on the eve of ordination to the priesthood. It is taken for granted that they also exist, in proportion to a candidate's age and opportunities, from the moment he conceives the serious idea of becoming a priest. In the early stages of what is believed to be a vocation, there is ample room for mistakes and errors of judgement, both on the part of the subject and of those who are guiding his steps. As soon as the mistake is discovered and established, the idea of becoming a priest is very properly abandoned. A young man who, in popular language, has 'tried his vocation' in a Seminary and found it wanting, has performed an excellent and a generous action. It has

been a source of much anxiety and searching of heart ; it has involved much prayer, and a manner of life which is, at least, much more penitential than that led by other youths of his age. If the resulting decision is adverse to the existence of a vocation, it is anything but a matter of personal reproach to a candidate or to his family. The attitude taken up in some parts towards such a person, implying that he has turned his back on God and his vocation, is not only cruel and unjust ; it betrays a notion of priestly vocation which is altogether foreign to Catholic principles. For the call of God is normally to be detected by the qualities and dispositions with which the subject has been endowed by God. Having the requisite fitness the call of the Church completes decisively his vocation.

§ 1

First and foremost, the priesthood must be desired with a *right intention*. From what has been already said, regarding the use of force of any kind in directing a youth towards the priesthood, it follows that his intention must, at least before receiving the tonsure, be his own personal wish. This does not mean that the subject can never be suggested to him by parents or others, for their intervention can be regarded as an instrument of God's will. It means that, eventually, the choice must be free and deliberate on the part of the candidate.

Intention is an act of the will which presupposes knowledge in the understanding : knowledge of what the priesthood really is, and sufficient acquaintance with the life a priest has to lead and the obligations he assumes ; knowledge especially of the meaning of the celibate life which is voluntarily undertaken, in the Latin Church, with the subdiaconate. The degree of knowledge, on which a right intention is based, is relative to a person's age and

experience. Desire for the priesthood in a boy is necessarily vague and confused ; it will become more clear as he proceeds to a fuller realisation of all that the priesthood entails. Adequate knowledge of the sacerdotal state and obligations can be presumed in a candidate on the eve of ordination. But what cannot be presumed is that the desire corresponds substantially, and with sufficient rectitude, to the knowledge obtained. For it is possible, with full knowledge of what the priesthood is, to desire it for motives altogether inadequate and unworthy, because it may appear to offer the enjoyment of an easy life free from care and anxiety, because secret influences can be set in motion to secure ecclesiastical honours and advancement, or because no other career is open which offers the same material inducements. All these motives, needless to say, are not only unworthy but sinful. ' I have chosen you, and have appointed you, that you should go, and should bring forth fruit and your fruit should remain.'[1] ' Every high-priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in the things that pertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins.'[2] It is the purpose of the priesthood, as instituted by Jesus Christ, to be the means of bringing his graces to mankind, to be the bridge by which men reach God and God reaches men, and by this means to promote and augment the glory of God. ' I honour my father . . . I seek not my own glory.'[3] What evils the Church has suffered from a priesthood seeking personal comfort and advantage, rather than the glory of God in the salvation of souls, the reforms of the Council of Trent testify. Human nature being what it is, ambition and cupidity is still liable to attract the worst kind of candidate towards the priest-

[1] John xv, 16.
[2] Heb. v, 1.
[3] John viii, 49.

hood, even in times when the Church is largely lacking in material wealth and honour. 'All seek the things that are their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's.'[1]

The minimum rightness of intention is to desire the priesthood for the glory of God, by assisting in the salvation of the souls of men, but, beyond this minimum, there are limitless degrees of priestly aspiration according to the measure of the giving of Christ. The priest is the 'light of the world,' but it depends on himself whether he is distinguished by the care with which he keeps within the legal limit of his obligations, or whether he expands in laborious zeal for the cause of Christ. Preparation for ordination is necessarily a purifying process, in which unworthy motives are gradually eliminated as the meaning of the office becomes more clear.

Nor can we expect this right intention so to predominate as to exclude absolutely all other motives. There are very few human actions which are not performed with *mixed* motives. 'There are but few who come to him with a sole and undivided intention of serving him. Of all those women whose conversion is recorded in the gospel, only Magdalen came out of pure love. . . . So the first hermit, Paul, withdrew from the world when only fifteen to avoid persecution; S. Ignatius Loyola sought the Lord by reason of his tribulations, and so on of a hundred others. We must not expect everyone to make a perfect beginning; it matters little how we begin, if we are firmly resolved to go on earnestly, and persevere to the end.'[2] The possession of a right intention, as manifested, in due proportion, in the life of the youngest candidate for the priesthood, is the surest sign of a divine vocation, and since the call is from God, the formation of such an intention is the work of the Holy Spirit. The

[1] Phil. ii, 21.

[2] S. Francis de Sales, *Letter* 679, edition Blaise.

other qualities, which we are going to discuss, can often exist in one who has no desire for the priesthood whatever, but the right intention is the touchstone, separating the shepherd who enters by the door from the thief and the robber ' climbing in ' by another way.[1]

§ 2

Intimately connected with right intention is the attainment of at least a minimum degree of personal sanctity. For the priesthood, as S. Bernard says, is the ' profession of perfection ' ; it carries with it an obligation to attain to holiness of life, greater even than that induced by the vows in a religious order. This extremely vital doctrine will be more fully treated in a later chapter.[2] It must suffice here to state, succinctly and briefly, what is the minimum required by the Church.

The perfection of a Christian soul consists essentially in charity, the two-fold love of God and one's neighbour, operating in the observance of the commandments. The other virtues, theological and moral, existing in a soul in a state of grace and charity, are enlivened and vivified by this love of God, whereby the human soul is united, as far as is possible in this life, to God its last end. For everything is said to be perfect in so far as it attains the end for which it is made. Grace and charity perfect the natural moral virtues. To describe with any completeness the virtuous life of a Christian, and in particular the minimum of moral worth required in a candidate for Holy Orders, would take us far beyond the limits of this discussion. But there are certain particular virtues, proper to the priestly state, which may be taken as exhibiting the minimum degree of attainment, and

[1] John x, 1.
[2] Cf. *infra*, Ch. VIII.

which attest a moral excellence over and above ordinary rectitude of life. Inasmuch as the priest is obliged to seek a perfection of life over and above that which is common to all Christians, the possession of these particular virtues can be taken as a test or guide indicating a divine vocation.

The first place must be given to the virtue of chastity, which, in the Western Church, is vowed to God at the reception of the subdiaconate:[1] 'steadfast chastity; purity and innocence; observance of spiritual discipline . . . that the example of their chastity may be a pattern of holiness to the people.'[2] Following the classical teaching of S. Alphonsus,[3] which is universally observed, a young man addicted to sexual vice even of a solitary kind cannot, with a good conscience, approach the priesthood, until he has shown definite and unusual signs of overcoming the habit. Of all the negative indications of priestly vocation, a flagrant absence of the virtue of chastity clearly demonstrates the absence of a vocation. Like any other habit of vice, it can be overcome with the grace of God, by stern personal discipline in avoiding all possible occasions of sin. But some proof of progress is essential. For a young man would otherwise be exposing himself to grave sin, and exposing the Church to scandal, by entering upon a state of life for which he is fitted neither by nature nor grace. If God has not granted this grace, it is a sign that he is not calling to the priesthood. Grave and important issues turn upon this doctrine, and concrete cases can be decided only by the conscience of the candidate, assisted by the prudent

[1] Cf. p. 52 *supra*.

[2] 'Pudor constans, innocentiae puritas, et spiritualis observantia disciplinae . . . ut suae castitatis exemplo imitationem sanctam plebs acquirat.' *Pont. Rom.* (Ordination of Deacons).

[3] *Theol. Moral.*, VI, 63.

advice and counsel of his confessor. We have merely indicated the minimum, and the border-line is often difficult to determine. The normal and general case of a candidate for the priesthood exhibits no particular difficulty on this score. Careful moral education of a youth from his earliest years generally has the result expected by the Church, and, in many cases, baptismal innocence, at least in regard to this particular sin, is unimpaired at the time of ordination.

There is a second virtue which also has a prominent place in the ordination rite. The ordinand promises, in a most solemn manner, reverence and obedience to his bishop. It is essentially a priestly virtue, for the whole value of his ministration turns on the commission he receives from the authority of the Church. The bishop is the chief representative of the pastoral office, and the salvation of the souls in his diocese is chiefly his care and his responsibility. To assist him in this enormous work, others are ordained by him, receive faculties for spiritual ministration from him, undertake the work he indicates, and follow in all things his direction. This virtue of obedience is of outstanding importance in these days, when the idea of submission to lawful authority is, perhaps, on the decline. For a Catholic priest it is essential from the fact of his dependence on the bishop, in the exercise of the pastoral office, and above all because he is the representative of a Church whose chief glory is the possession of an authority, universally exercised and obeyed throughout the world. It consists in an attitude of mind which is prepared to submit personal preferences and inclinations to the will of properly constituted superiors, and even to forestall those wishes without waiting for a positive command. If a candidate for the priesthood is not willing and anxious to do this, his value will be lessened, and his life, instead of being an assistance to the bishop in the work of the

diocese, will be a positive nuisance and a hindrance. Unlike the previous virtues we have been discussing, obedience can be more easily tested in the external forum, and, inasmuch as the call of external authority is the decisive element in priestly vocation, it frequently happens that this particular criterion is the one more often applied in deciding canonically on the existence of a vocation.

Without confusing the issue by indicating a long list of the moral virtues, which should grace the life of a youth being called by God to the priesthood, there is one other which should be mentioned as a most useful sign of vocation, although it cannot be easily expressed in one word. It consists in a certain fixity and stability of purpose in adhering to projects undertaken, what one could call for want of a better word ' perseverance ' or ' doggedness ' of character. This is a useful asset in any walk of life, but there are several reasons which constitute it a specifically priestly virtue. For, without it, a youth will scarcely ever manage to pass through the rather long and dull period of tutelage and preparation, nor will he succeed in acquiring the other virtues of the priestly state, and the knowledge necessary for exercising the sacerdotal functions. Moreover, the pastoral office demands this virtue. A priest is called by God to be not only ' a ' priest, but ' this ' priest, with ' this ' particular work to do for God's glory. By constantly changing from one parish to another, by giving birth to a variety of schemes and efforts, all still-born, his energy will be wasted and dissipated. There is a type of mind for whom variety, change of scene and occupation, novelties and fresh employment, are the very essence of life. Unfortunately a man of this type, however excellent he may be in other walks of life, will scarcely ever find a suitable outlet as a priest. The normal priestly life is a rather humdrum existence. If any good is to be done at all, it will be the result of constant

and persevering effort in one direction. Lacking this quality of persistent and steady application, the priest's life is liable to be wasted, and the good he is likely to do the Church almost negligible.

These three natural moral virtues, chastity, obedience and perseverance, must suffice in our examination of the signs of vocation. If they are present, it will be found that the other moral virtues are also present, in due proportion. In fact, the qualities outlined by S. Paul, as indicating fitness for the episcopate or presbyterate, are little more than those found in any upright honest man : ' For a bishop must be without crime, as the steward of God, not proud, not subject to anger, not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre ; but given to hospitality, gentle, sober, just, holy, continent.'[1]

Crowning and perfecting them all is the virtue of charity, the bond of perfection,[2] *forma omnium virtutum*,[3] the two-fold love of God and one's neighbour. The love of Christ, and of all men for his sake, must dominate a priest's life, as the spring and source of all his activity in the service of God and man. ' Receive the priestly vestment, by which is signified Charity ; for God is able to increase within thee charity and a perfect work.'[4]

§ 3

A further sign of priestly vocation is the possession of adequate knowledge. This, again, is one which can easily be tested externally by those who are assisting the bishop in the canonical choice of candidates. For it is

[1] Titus i, 7, 8 ; cf. also 1 Tim. iii.

[2] Col. iii, 14.

[3] *Summa Theol.*, II–II, 23, 8.

[4] ' Accipe vestem sacerdotalem, per quam caritas intelligitur ; potens est enim Deus, ut augeat tibi caritatem et opus perfectum.' *Pontif. Rom.* (Ordination of Priests).

an essential part of the office of a priest to teach : ' Go ye and teach all nations.'[1] He has to meet with all classes of the community, and not infrequently he has a prominent share in the public life of the district ; he is expected to solve difficult cases of conscience, and undertake the direction of souls ; he has to deal correctly with intricate matrimonial legislation ; he is required to expound and defend the Catholic faith in private and in public. If the necessary degree of knowledge and culture is lacking, he would do harm rather than good to the cause of the Church. Average intellectual ability is all that is required, and it is quite the exception for a candidate, eminently suitable on other grounds, to be rejected solely on the score of defective knowledge. A certain minimum of bodily health and vigour is also required, especially if the candidate is being educated on charitable funds. It would be unreasonable to expect a diocese to assume the charge of one who is likely to be an invalid and a permanent burden.

The degree in which these qualities are attained varies very considerably, not only in individuals but also in the mass ; it is relative to the needs of the Church and the number of candidates who offer themselves for ordination. But, even in times of direst need, a certain minimum is necessary before a man can be rightly ordained to the priesthood. It varies also in this way, at least in practice : a candidate who possesses a mental equipment rather below the average may often be found to counterbalance this deficiency by an unusual degree of sanctity. It is for the authorities of the external forum to determine whether in all the circumstances there are sufficient signs of vocation taken altogether. Such was, in fact, the judgement made with regard to the Curé of Ars, whose

[1] Matt. xxviii, 19.

intellectual attainments were of the slenderest, and whose vocation was for a long time considered doubtful by those responsible for coming to a decision.[1]

* * * *

The foregoing qualities are the chief signs that God is calling a person to the priesthood. With the exception of the first, namely, the right intention, they are common to many other walks of life in which no divine vocation is required. It is the right intention, therefore, which predominates. If the other qualities are absent, especially when they have been publicly tested, and the candidate still intends and desires to be a priest, his intention is not a *right* intention. He is deceived in thinking that he is being called by God, for if the divine vocation to the priesthood were present, God would not withhold the endowments and qualities necessary for its adequate exercise. It is for this reason that the law of the Church regards an inquiry into a candidate's vocation as exactly equivalent to an inquiry whether the requisite qualities are present or not. If they are clearly absent the candidate is not to be ordained : ' The following persons must not be allowed to remain in the Seminary : discontented, incorrigible and mutinous persons ; those whose character and conduct appear to make them unfit for the ecclesiastical state ; those who make so little progress in study that there is no hope that they will acquire sufficient knowledge ; those, most of all, who have, perhaps, fallen into immorality or infidelity should be at once dismissed.'[2]

[1] Trochu, *Life of Curé d'Ars*, Eng. Tr., p. 81.

[2] Canon 1371 : ' E Seminario dimittantur dyscoli, incorrigibiles, seditiosi, ii qui ob mores atque indolem ad statum ecclesiasticum idonei non videantur ; itemque, qui in studiis adeo parum proficiant ut spes non effulgeat eos sufficientem doctrinam fore assecuturos ; praesertim vero statim dimittantur qui forte contra bonos mores aut fidem deliquerint.'

The possession of these qualities in one who has a right intention must be taken as a sign that he is being called by God to the priesthood. He offers himself to the bishop of a diocese and the voice of the Church calls him decisively and definitely in the name of God.

§ 4

In this discussion some reference has been made to another requisite in a candidate for ordination, which many people, up to within quite recent times, used to regard as essential for a true vocation to the priesthood. It used to be held that, if a person is called by God to the priesthood, he will experience a secret interior drawing of the Holy Spirit indicating to him the divine will. This special voice of God is usually classified among the mystical operations of God upon the soul, that is to say, amongst those experiences in which the soul has no active part whatever, but is completely passive under the divine inspiration. A summons to the priesthood of this character, it would seem, is clearly and without any qualification a call of God, a divine vocation. It was such a call which came to the sleeping child in the temple, the son of answered prayer, vowed by his mother to the service of God, and chosen thus by God for the prophetic office.[1] Bishop Hedley thus describes an experience of this kind : ' The heart sees something, awakes to something that was there all the time, but unregarded ; something that has to do with death, judgement and eternity, and with God. Then a power from on high seems given, and the heart flames out in a strong and generous resolution. This brings with it the breaking with some person or thing, some occasion of sin, some evil habit. . . . When one

[1] 1 Kings iii.

looks back, one can see that, at or about a given time, all these symptoms so plainly showed themselves that one's life before and one's life after—one's existence or personality before and one's self after—are divided from one another like stages in a journey, or like stations in the ascent of a mountain.'[1] This description refers to the phenomenon of 'conversion,' but it explains quite accurately what is meant by the divine inspiration or call to the priesthood, of which we are speaking, an inclination calm and pleasant, yet strong and permanent, which seizes and captivates the will, drawing it perceptibly towards the priesthood.[2]

Now, with regard to a perceptible spiritual attraction of this kind, two things must be said. If it were possible to take a kind of census amongst a given body of priests, say in a diocese, it would, I think, be found that a large number of them can trace the beginnings of their vocation to some experience of this kind. The time and place of its happening remains still vividly before their minds. They responded to the call, desiring to serve God faithfully in the priesthood and promote his glory thereby; they were found to possess the necessary qualities of mind and body and finally were chosen by the bishop and ordained. It would be folly to regard all such inspirations as an illusion, and practically the equivalent of denying to the Holy Spirit of God those inspirations by which he moves the souls of men in whom he dwells. By his seven-fold gift those souls are able easily to respond to the movement of God. One could easily defend the proposition that such an inspiration is most desirable in every vocation to the priesthood and, if desirable, a grace to be prayed for earnestly.

But, in the second place, while granting the existence

[1] Bp. Hedley, *Lex Levitarum*, p. 13.
[2] Cf. *Rev. Apolog.*, X, p. 211.

or desirability of such calls from God, it is essential to remember that, in the teaching of the Church, such an experience is neither necessary for establishing the existence of a divine vocation, nor is it even a decisive and infallible sign that God wishes that person to be a priest. The necessity of such an internal drawing first began to be taught at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and it was due largely to the efforts being made, as a result of the decrees of the Council of Trent, to ward off from the priesthood the type of candidate who became a priest solely for the enjoyment of a benefice or other unworthy motive. Such abuses as these, as well as the indefensible practice of designing children, almost from the cradle, for this or that office in the Church, led to a wholesome reaction, and it seemed to many that a divine vocation could not exist apart from an interior inspiration of the Spirit of God.

The true doctrine is now clearly established by a Roman decision of July 1st, 1912. It is in perfect accord with the traditional teaching of the Church, both as regards vocation and sound mystical theology. 'The condition which must be ascertained in a candidate for Holy Orders, and which is called a vocation to the priesthood, in no way consists—at least necessarily and as an ordinary law—in a certain internal inspiration or invitation to the priesthood given to the subject by the Holy Spirit.'[1] Taken by itself, an interior inspiration is not a sufficient sign, and, like all other visions and private revelations, must even be regarded with suspicion until ratified by the external authoritative judgement of the Church. In fact, the theory that an internal inspiration is the sole criterion of a vocation to the ministry is in great favour among Nonconformists

[1] Note A, § 1.

and other Protestants, to whom the idea of God speaking through an external visible Church is altogether repugnant.[1] The need of an external call of the Church, which is alone decisive in determining and completing a divine vocation, has been discussed in the previous chapter. This tradition has never been abandoned in practice, no matter what the theories of private authors may have attempted in the way of innovation. The abuse of unworthy candidates seeking ordination will not be remedied by paving the way for an equally serious abuse. For, if an interior inspiration is a necessary and decisive criterion of the call of God, the door would be opened to candidates deluded by imaginary inspirations, of which the history of the Church offers many examples. For what bishop would not hesitate to refuse ordination to one who had received such an inspiration from God ?

But what is the degree of truth in this theory ? It is simply this. Provided nothing more is understood by this element in vocation than what we have already described as ' right intention,' then the doctrine not only may, but must, be defended. For the formation of a right intention to serve God as a priest is itself an inspiration of the Holy Spirit ' who breathes wheresoever he wills.' Secondary causes may have assisted the genesis of this desire, but, as we have seen, it must ultimately be the personal wish of the candidate ; the divine intervention in its formation is necessary, because it is a desire for a function eminently supernatural and calling for graces of a special order from God. It is necessary, too, because no one may take this honour to himself unless called by God ; this grace is the divine operation in the internal

[1] Cf. quotation from Dr. Jowett *supra*, p. 62. Also ' The Nonconformist Churches ' in *The Problem of a Career* (J. W. Arrowsmith, Ltd., to whom due acknowledgement is made for the use of my own article ' The Catholic Priesthood ').

forum, just as the calling of the Church is the work of God in the external forum of ecclesiastical law and authority. We reach God, as S. Thomas teaches, being drawn internally by Grace and externally by his law. Both are necessary for the vocation of a Christian to the attainment of his last end in the vision of God, and both are equally necessary for the call to the priesthood, through whose functions it has pleased God that the souls of men shall be brought to him.

CHAPTER VI

FOSTERING VOCATIONS

ANYONE who has had even a passing acquaintance with the conditions of the Church in France, at the present moment, cannot have failed to notice the efforts being made to foster vocations to the priesthood. In the Catholic Press, in the Churches, and in public conferences and organisations, the movement is strong and widely spread. It is due very largely to the abnormal needs of the Church at the present time, but it is also due to a more accurate knowledge concerning the nature of priestly vocation. In England, the scarcity of priests has not yet caused anything like so real and pressing a problem. In proportion to our numbers and resources the needs of the faithful are, on the whole, adequately supplied. But the Church does need more priests in English-speaking countries ; above all, priests of the best kind, well equipped for the office, earnest and enthusiastic.

The method of encouraging and fostering vocations depends on the principles of the previous chapters. From the time a youth enters a Seminary to test his vocation to the priesthood, the method of fostering his priestly aims and aspirations is the immediate concern of the bishop of the diocese, and those to whom he has confided the work. With this particular aspect of the question this chapter is not concerned. Those who are engaged in teaching and training seminarists know, from

their own experience, the difficulties and problems to be faced. The training of the clergy has always been one of the gravest concerns of the Church, and a special Roman Congregation is occupied with the guidance and supervision of Seminaries and sacred studies. The Seminaries in England are old and well-established institutions, in many cases having their roots deeply imbedded in the past, even to the days when to be educated in a Seminary was to be guilty of treason and liable to death. Each have their own customs, traditions and method of training. Should it appear necessary to modify them, it is the business of the bishop of the diocese or of the Roman Congregation, and of no one else.

§ 1

The present chapter is concerned more with fostering vocations among boys and youths who have not yet entered the Seminary. The whole matter is so much outside the experience of the average layman that he may be excused, perhaps, in holding the view that the provision of a good and adequate priesthood is not his concern. He is accustomed to hear Mass and to find priests to administer the Sacraments, wherever he happens to be, and he expects them to be zealous and good. But a moment's reflection should bring home to his mind that it is from good Catholic homes that the Church draws the candidates. The vitality of any country's priesthood is usually a reflection of the general Catholic life of the locality. The people get, in fact, the kind of priests they deserve, and the old adage ' sic sacerdos sic populus ' is profoundly true, not only in the sense that the priest should be an example to the people, but that he is an indication of the general character of the people. Although it is the episcopal prerogative to control everything concerned with ecclesiastical training in the

Seminaries, the measure of his success depends on the type of candidate who enters, and this in its turn depends upon the faithful of the diocese from whom the candidates are drawn.

It is, or should be, a serious preoccupation of the Catholic laity to provide their very best for the service of God. For, as the Roman Pontifical so finely says, ' all those who sail in a ship have a common interest in the security or danger of the vessel.'[1] The phrase occurs in the bishop's address preceding the ordination of priests, in which he reminds the people solemnly of their part in the election and invites them to oppose, if necessary, the ordination of any candidate known to be unworthy. The trustworthiness and security of the Church, the barque of Peter, in which we are all travelling, is a matter of anxiety not only to the rulers but to all the people. Every Christian is a member of a ' chosen generation, a kingly priesthood,' and has a share in offering the sacrifice of the Mass. A Catholic who is proud of his religion takes a living interest in the status of the clergy, and is rightly ashamed if their lives are unworthy. Every member of the Church has, therefore, some obligation in providing suitable ordinands. Can this obligation be explained a little more precisely ?

In the first place, it has been pointed out in a previous chapter that the providence of God, in designating certain men for the priesthood, makes use of secondary causes.[2] Accordingly, the assistance which any person may give, in turning the thoughts of a suitable candidate towards the priesthood, is an assistance inspired and guided by God. The ordinary and normal method of divine vocation does not consist in an interior perceptible

[1] ' . . . rectori navis et navigio deferendis eadem est vel securitatis ratio, vel communis timoris.' *Pontif. Rom.* (Ordination of Priests).

[2] P. 73.

drawing of the Holy Spirit.[1] If it did consist in this, then the most any person could do would be to discern the existence of such a vocation, and put no obstacle in the way of its fulfilment. But, inasmuch as all that is required in the candidate is a certain minimum of the requisite qualities and dispositions, together with a right intention, the part of those who wish to do something positive in furthering a vocation to the priesthood consists, first of all, in encouraging and discerning these qualities, and, secondly, in suggesting *with extreme discretion and prudence* that God is perhaps designing the one who possesses them for the priesthood, thus assisting the genesis of a right intention. If the doctrine of the previous chapters has been rightly appreciated, such a prudent and discreet intervention cannot be regarded as an interference with the work of God's providence and grace. It is an integral part of the divine scheme. For apart from the altogether exceptional case of immediate divine action, as, for example, in the vocation of S. Paul, God normally works on men through the mediation of others ; the effect is no less traceable to God, the First Cause, if he works through created causes. If the human intervention, of which we are speaking, is due to wrong motives ; if unsuitable candidates are thrust forward by interested parties ; if moral force is used to urge an unwilling subject ; if the ultimate canonical judgement of accredited authority is resisted—in all these cases there is clearly no operation of God. But, provided one understands the meaning of divine vocation, as we have attempted to describe it, then those who seek to turn the aspirations of suitable youths towards the priesthood are doing a work of great value and rich in merit.

Unfortunately, Catholics are to be found who, far from using any influence to foster vocations, appear to

[1] P. 97.

turn their efforts in the opposite direction. Owing to completely erroneous views on the subject, they take upon themselves the very heavy responsibility of suppressing the first signs of vocation in the young. The Canon law orders that those who aspire to the priesthood should be received into a Seminary from their earliest years, in order to be preserved from worldly attractions.[1] Yet, one often hears it said that a boy of sixteen is too young to know his mind in this matter. His desire is allowed to weaken and soon vanishes altogether. Usually, the same parents who make this objection gladly allow their sons to follow their natural bent in other directions at a still earlier age.

Others, although knowing that no irrevocable step is taken until a youth has reached his majority, fear that the course of studies pursued in a junior Seminary unfits a boy for the struggle of life should he not proceed to the priesthood, and they dissuade him from taking such a step. Some, on purely selfish motives, dread what they call 'losing' their child. Both these objections are without foundation. A course of training which follows the ordinary classical curriculum of a public school, with the additional spiritual and moral formation of the ecclesiastical life, is anything but a drawback; and the 'loss' of a child from the home, during the greater part of the year, is one which most people gladly suffer, in sending their sons to boarding establishments to be educated.

But the chief objection, deeply rooted in the minds of many, is the fear that in undertaking a celibate life at an age when its full implications are not clearly appreciated, a youth might be exposing himself to unhappiness; they may even quite honestly fear that his character is not equal to the strain placed upon it. The subject of

[1] Canon 1353.

clerical celibacy has already been mentioned, and it would be foolish to minimise the grave obligations freely assumed with the subdiaconate. It is, without any question, a considerable sacrifice for the average man. On the other hand, it would be equally foolish to shut one's eyes to the fact that the marriage bond is equally permanent and irrevocable. In allowing their sons to choose a partner in marriage, parents are not blind to the possibility of conjugal unhappiness in later life ; the obligations of the married state may easily entail very great sacrifices. Yet, on ordinary rules of prudence, they consent to his choice of a suitable partner, and they have the certainty that the grace of the sacrament of marriage will enable the married couple to surmount the difficulties of their state of life. The same is absolutely true of the priesthood. They need have no fear that a youth, who discovers himself totally unfitted for the celibate life, will be encouraged by the Church to assume its obligations. In fact, he will be dissuaded from doing so on the score that one of the signs of vocation is lacking.[1] It is an essential part of seminary training to develop habits of chastity which will last throughout the priest's life. Difficulties there will nearly always be, but the grace of the priesthood will enable him to surmount them.

The important point to bear in mind is that in placing no obstacles in the way of a boy's vocation, and in suggesting the priesthood to him if a prudent judgement points to the likelihood of his possessing the requisite qualities, parents and others in authority are acting as the instruments of God's providence. It is a radical error to doubt or call in question the genuineness of a desire for the priesthood on the score that its origin is due to what appear to be natural causes ; for this point

[1] Cf. p. 91.

of view is equivalent to requiring a special internal immediate call of God to the soul, an inspiration which often indeed exists, but which we have seen to be neither necessary nor even a decisive sign of vocation.

§ 2

Among all the persons and influences used by God to attract subjects to the priestly state, the parent holds a special place. Indirectly, the influence of a good Catholic family can, nearly always, be regarded as one of the most powerful causes in inspiring a desire for the priesthood. Catholic parents hold a natural mandate from God in everything which pertains to the religious education of their children. It is from the parent, especially from the mother, that a child learns first about God and his love for men. The religious teaching of the school may be more detailed and accurate, but the living force of the Catholic religion is acquired in the home. Even though no positive guidance towards the priesthood is attempted, the Catholic family is the natural soil on which vocations will grow. In many such families, it is the dearest wish of the parents that one of their sons should one day stand at the altar of God. They should not hesitate to suggest the priesthood to a child from his earliest years. As time passes, it will become more evident whether his character and dispositions justify the more definite step of offering him to the bishop as a Church student.

Bearing in mind what has already been said regarding the necessary fitness and rightness of intention, we may apply the doctrine to the present subject, and see in what way a parent may develop these qualities, and form some initial judgement as to the advisability of encouraging a youth to desire the priesthood. What we have to say will necessarily be of a somewhat general character, and

its application will depend very much on the age of the child. Moreover, it must constantly be remembered that parental influence and judgement constitute only one of the early stages in the growth and development of a vocation; the ultimate and final decision is in the hands of ecclesiastical authority.

The place of importance should be given to the child's intention in desiring the priesthood. In a very young boy his motives will usually be inadequate: more likely than not it will be some quite secondary and accidental aspect of the priestly life that will occupy the first place in his imagination, for example, the vestments worn at Mass. The care of the parents should be to elevate and purify this motive of attraction, by keeping constantly before his mind that vestments and ceremonial are used because the priest is offering a sacrifice—giving something to God; if he ever becomes a priest it will be giving up his life to the service of God. . . .

Side by side with a right intention, and a necessary indication of it, his personal religious life must also develop. This development should consist, not so much in an increasing number of devotional practices—these will naturally find a place in a good Catholic household—but in the practice of fraternal charity. It is taken for granted that he knows, as an item of religious knowledge, that through 'charity,' the two-fold love of God and one's neighbour, our souls are perfected in sanctity. The full implication of this profound yet simple truth will obviously not be perceived by a young child. It should be the parents' business to train a boy, whom they hope one day to be a priest, in the ready and cheerful sacrifice of his own whims and pleasures in the service of other people, especially of other members of the household. His natural resentment at being required to yield to his brothers and sisters, in their games, recreations and all the various conflicting claims that arise in any home,

should be met by impressing upon his mind that these things are required of him because he wants to be a priest. What I mean to say is that the habit of unselfishness in yielding to the needs of others must be acquired first, long before its real setting as the basis of a ' right intention ' in desiring the priesthood is even faintly understood : ' Every high-priest taken from among men, is ordained for men that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices.'[1] It is a process which must grow and become more evident as the youth grows in age. Only too often, it seems to me, this vital attitude of the whole priestly life is not properly encouraged by parents, through a mistaken notion of the deference due to the priestly state. In this attitude of deference a youth who is approaching the priesthood is given a proportionate share : he is exempted from common and unpleasant tasks, instead of being required to do rather more than his share : he is waited upon instead of being expected to act as a servant :[2] his whims and fancies in food and drink are encouraged, instead of being resolutely suppressed : he takes the first place, in fact, instead of the last. All this is the very worst way of training a candidate for the priesthood. He becomes imperceptibly self-centred, self-opinionated ; he is becoming a priest for himself, and he arrives at the Seminary with hardly a suspicion that the life of a priest is meant to be a life spent in the service of others ; he may, by a great effort, overcome this initial defect of character, but it is much more likely that at the first big issue confronting him, requiring generosity and a spirit of self-sacrifice, e.g. obedience to a difficult rule or study of an uncongenial subject, his fragile resources will be unequal to the strain. Should he become a priest, his life is liable to be soured

[1] Heb. v, 1.
[2] John xiii, 13–16.

by the conviction that he is being ill-treated and neglected by his superiors, and that his excellent qualities are unappreciated by the people.

It might be objected that, however excellent and desirable this 'intention' may be, its fostering in the manner suggested is liable to turn a boy's mind away from the priesthood altogether; the prospect in front of him might appear too bleak and dreary. This objection would be a valid one, were the question merely one of creating altruistic sentiments with no notion of a personal reward. The reward of a good priest, as of any faithful Christian, is in the possession of God for ever; it is a motive of action which can never be excluded from our service of God in this world. It has some counterpart, even on this side of eternity, in the happiness of loving and serving God. Whatever bleakness or unattractiveness there may be, in this idea of self-sacrifice, should be counterbalanced in a boy's mind by the evident happiness and cheerfulness of the priests of his acquaintance, and by keeping well to the fore all the attractive elements of the priestly life.

For the life of the average priest is an extremely happy one, and it is clearly of the first importance that a boy, whom one is expecting to be a priest, should realise that, although the sacerdotal state undoubtedly requires some degree of self-sacrifice, it is nevertheless a cheerful and happy existence. The ultimate reasons underlying this fact would scarcely be appreciated by a boy's mind: the choices and inclinations of the young depend much more on the vivid impressions of the senses than upon rational argument. It is undesirable for a youth who has priestly aspirations to be brought very much in contact with a priest who, for reasons generally unconnected with his priesthood, is a depressed dejected man. Perhaps, at times, the gravity of the priestly office and the apparent necessity of preserving a studied decorum

in the presence of the laity, has painted the priest's life in so sombre a hue that a normal high-spirited youth is frightened and discouraged. Perhaps the poverty, the loneliness and other hardships of the priestly state are sometimes too much underlined. If the priest he knows and sees in the Parish Church, in the school he attends, and as a visitor in his own home, is cheerful and good-humoured, even in the face of worry and anxiety, it cannot fail to confirm him in his desire. 'Merry' is a word constantly used in contemporary descriptions of the innumerable Seminary priests who suffered martyrdom for the faith in England. In any case, we will not attract candidates to the priestly life by displaying it as a sad and sorrowful existence. The reverse is the truth.

Everything that has been said in an earlier chapter concerning the qualities required in the candidate, will naturally have an immediate application to the question of fostering vocations. The virtues of obedience and perseverance provide a most useful test of rectitude of intention. It is taken for granted that young boys who appear to have the possibilities of a vocation to the priesthood, will usually be serving in the Sanctuary of the Parish Church. Once the novelty has worn off, a regular, faithful and punctual attendance in serving at Mass, especially at an early hour, is a most useful indication of seriousness of purpose. The same remark applies equally to regular confession and communion. A boy destined for the priesthood must show unusual interest in everything connected with the service of the Church, helping in the sacristy work, and holding himself willingly at the disposal of the priest. His regular confessor, it is presumed, is aware of his intention, and, for all practical purposes, it is chiefly the confessor who is able to train him in the virtue of chastity.

The suggestion of desiring the priesthood may come from the parent or from anyone else with adequate

knowledge. If the idea is entertained, no matter from what source it has its origin, it is extremely imprudent to allow the matter to become public knowledge. The candidate's intention has to be tested, and the existence of a proportionate degree of the requisite qualities must be established, before any definite steps can be taken. An initial judgement can best be formed by the parish priest, and the normal procedure should always be to bring the candidate to his notice. A very common and excellent method of securing an elementary test, in the case of boys living at home, is for someone to undertake the teaching of Latin—if the subject is not already in the curriculum of the school which the boy is attending. This provides not merely a test of intelligence, but, what is of far more importance, of persevering application and obedience, and of willingness to sacrifice some leisure time.

The idea of acquiring a little knowledge of Latin could be encouraged even before any intention of becoming a priest has been manifested. It has a close connection with some appreciation of the liturgy of the Church. Experience has shown, explain it in whatever way you will, that those places are more prolific in vocations where the liturgy of the Church is carried out as completely as possible. There are many priests who trace the first beginnings of their desire for the priesthood to the active share given them, as boys or youths in their Parish Church, in the dignified celebration of High Mass, Vespers, the ceremonies of Holy Week and other liturgical functions. It is found that the knowledge of the liturgy, especially an intelligent use of the Missal, develops what may be called a priestly sense, and from this knowledge arises a love and veneration of the sacerdotal office, which is the ground from which vocations spring. Granted, there are other functions of the priesthood which are of greater importance than what is

called the liturgical spirit : there are, for example, the care of the poor and the sick, and the reclaiming of lapsed Catholics. But these are not, as a rule, the first thing to attract a youthful mind. Once the idea of becoming a priest is definitely entertained, then, by slow and easy stages, the full concept of the priestly life can be formed and strengthened. It is, in fact, of the utmost importance that, in the later stages of the development of a vocation, the candidate should regard as his ideal the priest whose life is spent in earnest, enthusiastic labour among the people. Yet, the chief function of the priesthood is to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin, and the stately ceremonial of the liturgy, with all its deep signification, usually provides the first inspiration towards the priestly life. It is chiefly the parochial clergy who can attract the proper type of candidate, both by the dignified ritual of their Churches, and by its complement—the service of God in serving men.

§ 3

We have had in view, so far, the type of vocation which is sown in early youth. In modern days, however, what are known as ' late vocations ' are becoming increasingly frequent. The mind and the practice of the Church, definitely established by the Council of Trent, makes the normal method of ecclesiastical training to consist in educating candidates from their boyhood for the service of the altar. But there have always been numerous examples of men of mature age, even widowers, offering themselves as candidates for ordination. This type of vocation possesses certain advantages, which are necessarily lacking in young men who have spent their whole lives before ordination in a school or Seminary. They have greater experience and maturity of judgement ;

their minds and outlook are more attuned to the layman's point of view ; their intention in entering the priesthood is more stable and, perhaps, more single-minded ; they are more capable of forming an unbiased decision regarding the burdens of a celibate life. Quite frequently the formation of their lives and habits happens to have coincided, substantially, with the formation the Church has in mind in training boys for the priesthood from early years. They may have followed the classical curriculum of a Catholic School, been well grounded in habits of obedience, have grown accustomed to ' thinking with the Church ' ; their previous life may have been as well disciplined as that of any Seminary ; their personal religion might easily be stronger and more living than that of a Seminarist ; in short, they may possess all the qualities required by the Church and, in addition, the experience of the life of a layman which the average Church student lacks. In their case, the transit from the lay to the ecclesiastical state is an easy one. They are an asset to any Seminary and make splendid priests.

It will be recognised, however, that ' late vocations ' deflect very often from this ideal type in one way or another. Of personal sanctity nothing need be said. It is taken for granted that without a minimum degree of sanctity, especially in the matter of chastity, no man of mature age could seek the priesthood with a right intention. But it is often necessary to scrutinise, much more carefully than in the case of a boy, the ' intention ' of the candidate, especially when his lay career has not been altogether successful.

Before he enters a Seminary, some priest with personal knowledge of his character should be able to make a prudent forecast, as to whether he will be able to live there happily for six years. A man of mature age might expect preferential treatment, exempting him from observing the ordinary rules ; but I know of no Diocesan

Seminary where this is allowed, and normally it is to the Diocesan Seminary that the candidate is sent. He is also apt to hold the view that his experience as a layman, and the knowledge of the world that he has acquired, is sufficient substitute for a knowledge of Philosophy and Theology. This is a simple error. If he has no knowledge of Latin he will need a stern application in study, and very probably he will find greater difficulty than a mere youth in attuning his mind to speculative thought. In many cases the man's previous studies and experience will add value to his studies for the priesthood, but it often happens that his previous life may have been confined to an office routine, with the result that his mental outlook is rather narrow ; yet of this fact he may be altogether unconscious.

These are some of the problems facing a candidate who approaches the priesthood late in life. Granted the minimum of right intention, sanctity and moral character, the advisability of abandoning a lay career, in order to test such a vocation, turns on deciding whether the candidate has sufficient mental ability for acquiring the special knowledge necessary in a priest, and whether he is docile enough to submit himself to the training of a Seminary.

Amongst the young men engaged in generous, active work for the Church, there are many who have these qualities, and whose lives would be an ornament to the priesthood. They may hesitate through an exaggerated fear of the studies and difficulties involved, and through a very proper disinclination to abandon a settled career or profession with the possibility, perhaps, of not reaching the priesthood. There exist institutions in some large cities, for example, in London at Edmonton and Walworth, which enable young men to test their vocation while continuing the practice of their profession. A few months in such a house would make it clear whether a more definite step could prudently be taken. Many

Seminaries, especially since the war, have special arrangements enabling this class of candidate to acquire some knowledge of Latin before commencing the regular course of studies. There is also the well-known scheme so energetically and successfully carried out by Fr. Lester, S.J., at Osterley. The proper course to be followed by any candidate, in the circumstances we are discussing, is to approach his own parish priest, who presumably knows something about him, and is really the only person competent to advise him regarding the first steps to be taken.

Among 'late vocations' of this kind, that of the convert clergyman holds an altogether special place. If he is unmarried his first impulse would naturally be to offer himself as a candidate for the priesthood, for he usually possesses all the qualities required. His intention is of the very best, tested as it is by his submission to the Church, an act which nearly always entails great personal sacrifice, the loss of friends and money, and returning, at least for a time, to the status of an ordinary layman. All this is, humanly speaking, a tremendous loss to suffer in exchange for the pearl of great price. For the same reasons it can be assumed that his personal sanctity renders him a fit subject for the priesthood.

It is desirable that, wherever possible, he should spend some time as a layman before beginning his preparation for the priesthood. In Catholic surroundings, he will learn from experience more about the Church and the priesthood than he could possibly obtain from the study of books. But this is not always a practical possibility and the bishop may admit him at once as a candidate for the priesthood. Usually, he will be required to complete the customary course of preparation in the Diocesan Seminary, for two reasons. In the first place, it cannot be assumed that a non-Catholic clergyman possesses the theological equipment of a priest. In some cases his previous

religious convictions may have been 'Catholic' in tendency, but he would himself be the first to admit that his knowledge lacks precision, and the process of un-learning may be long and arduous. But this aspect of the matter is the least important. The chief reason requiring a prolonged period of training is to establish more firmly the 'submission' he has made to the Church on his conversion, to train his mind and character in obedience to ecclesiastical authority, in small things as well as great, to get him accustomed to the company of his future brethren in the priesthood, and to imbue him with the spirit and outlook of a Catholic. As his acquaintance with the Church develops it may become apparent that he will serve God best as a layman. In a matter of such grave moment he should have, at least, as long a time for reflection as that given to a young man who has been a Catholic from his birth. However, the length of time which must elapse between conversion to the Church and priestly ordination depends entirely on the judgement of ecclesiastical authority.

These reflections on 'late vocations' may seem, at first sight, rather discouraging, but they are made solely with the purpose of encouraging the *right kind* of candidate to test his vocation to the priesthood. The term 'late vocation' is in common use, but it will be seen, from the doctrine of the previous two chapters, that the phrase is slightly misleading. It seems to imply, as it were, an after-thought on the part of divine providence. The truth is that God, in designing such men for the priesthood, has led them by a different and a longer route, because he requires priests of maturity and experience, as well as those who have lived from childhood within the Sanctuary. The Church would be poorer without them.

§ 4

We have left to the last the most powerful way of fostering vocations, a way in which every Christian may share, even though he may have no personal contact whatever with a future priest. It is by obeying Christ's wish and praying God to send labourers into the harvest. 'Seeing the multitudes he had compassion upon them, because they were distressed, and lying like sheep that have no shepherd. Then he saith to his disciples: The harvest indeed is great, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth labourers into his vineyard.'[1] Christ himself spent the night in prayer before choosing his disciples.[2] All vocation to the priesthood is from God, who has, in his providence, designed certain men for this office. Prayer is a vital part of the order which God has established. We do not change the divine will when our petitions are answered. It is the immutable God who, from all eternity, has determined that certain things will happen in answer to prayer. If this is true of all human needs it is still more true of the supernatural life, and of the priesthood which is the channel of so many divine graces. To busy ourselves with the work of encouraging and developing vocations and to neglect praying to God to grant them would, at the lowest estimate, betray an idea of the priestly office which is material and lacking in supernatural vigour. Parents and others who desire to see a certain youth aspire to the priesthood, should not neglect to further its possibility by prudent and natural means. But, above all, it must be the subject of their continual prayer to God. For nearly twenty years it was

[1] Matt. xi, 36.
[2] Luke vi, 12 and 13.

the custom of one mother to pray daily for an hour asking this favour of God, and six of her eight sons became priests.[1] This example is not so exceptional as one might think. Not only those immediately related to or interested in a particular candidate, not only those religious Orders whose prayer for the priesthood is one of their chief activities, but all Catholics, who have the welfare of the Church at heart, should not neglect to make this matter the object of their petitions to God.

Things that can be done at any time or period are commonly neglected altogether. It would be a practice in accordance with the liturgy of the Church to fulfil this duty during those periods in which ordinations usually take place, namely on the Ember Days.

Nor should we forget to invoke the assistance of the Saints, especially those whose sanctity is due to the perfect exercise of the priestly office. Men like S. Francis de Sales, S. Vincent de Paul and the Curé of Ars will continue, by their intercession, to secure a worthy succession of candidates for the priesthood of which they were such shining examples.

And what words can express the sacred and intimate relations existing between the Blessed Mother of God and the eternal priesthood of her Son? The language of devotion, on the lips of a Catholic, quite naturally tends to speak in exaggerated terms of the dignity and power of Our Blessed Lady. But, in this matter, no excess of devotional expression can equal the grandeur of the simple truths of divine revelation. She is the Mother of the Priesthood. From her the Son of God assumed the sacred humanity, which constituted him the one Mediator between God and man. Through her assistance, in the design of God, he received the priestly unction from the first moment of the Incarnation. 'He that is mighty

[1] Snead-Cox, *Life of Cardinal Vaughan*, Book I, Ch. II.

hath wrought great things in me.'[1] With absolute truth she could echo at that moment the words of the Eternal Father : ' Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. . . . Thou art a priest for ever according to the Order of Melchisedech.'[2] All those who are privileged to share the priesthood of Christ have a claim also on the maternal love of the Mother for her Son. She who brought forth our great High Priest continues, by her powerful intercession, to secure the continuance of his priesthood in the world. She is not a priest herself and the Church has forbidden the use of the title ' Virgo Sacerdos.' Her sublime office was to give a priesthood to the world, and any mother who has given, or who hopes to give, a son to the service of the Church, possesses in the Mother of Christ a sure patron at the throne of God : ' Ora pro populo, interveni pro clero, intercede pro devoto femineo sexu.'

[1] Luke i, 49.
[2] Heb. v, 5 ; cf. p. 6 *supra*.

CHAPTER VII

THE SEMINARY

§ 1

THE immediate preparation of a candidate for the reception of Holy Orders is a subject of extreme importance. The welfare of the Church, and the fulfilment of its divine mission among men, depends primarily and substantially on the lives and character of the secular clergy. 'When the world persecutes the Church, it falls first upon the regular orders. Their influence, their good works and sometimes the wealth which they accumulate excite jealousy and envy. They are not of the soil in the same sense that the diocesan clergy are, who are bound to remain on it by the condition of their state, as much as the regular clergy are bound by their rule to depart to any part of the world. The secular or diocesan clergy are indigenous, and nearly always remain in the country; and it has been disastrous for religion to the last degree where their education has been neglected. . . . The disaster has come, and come with double weight when, through persecution, the regulars have had to fly, as has happened, alas, so often during the last three hundred years, abandoning everything to a depressed clergy . . . the experience of the Church and common observation points out the necessity of a special, prolonged and, perhaps we may add, extraordinary care in the preparation of priests who are to live, for the most part, isolated lives

in the world, scattered like grains of salt over society to preserve its spiritual life. . . . They possess a greater freedom in order that they may render to God a greater service. And what is this phase of their life but a repetition in the priest of the life of the Good Shepherd, who went out into the wilderness to seek and tend the sheep that was lost.'[1]

The grave issues involved in providing the world with priests have always been recognised by the Church, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the disciplinary decrees of the Council of Trent. The famous cap. xviii of Session XXIII outlined the idea of ecclesiastical Seminaries, as they have since been constituted throughout the world. They are places in which youths are educated and trained, from an early age, with only one object in view: the perfect exercise of the pastoral office of the priesthood. The word itself was first used by Cardinal Pole, the Papal Legate, who in 1556 represented the Holy See in this country, and issued several decrees regarding its spiritual welfare. Amongst other things the laws of the IVth Lateran Council were reordained, and each Cathedral Church was required to erect a school, in which the roots or seed of the future clergy could be nurtured.[2]

It is a matter of pride for the Catholics of this country to remember that our forefathers, in spite of their distress and poverty and persecution, were among the first to put into execution the decrees of the Council of Trent. From the Seminaries abroad there came into England a constant stream of secular priests, ' seminary priests '

[1] Cardinal Vaughan, Preface to *S. John Baptist de Rossi*, pp. xxii–xxiv.

[2] ' In qua soboles quaedam et tamquam Seminarium ministrorum instituatur et conservetur.' *III Conc. Prov. Westm.*, p. 156.

as they were styled by the penal laws, who stemmed the tide of heresy, comforted and strengthened the Catholic remnant, and sealed in many cases their sacrificial priesthood by the sacrifice of their own lives. During the height of the Elizabethan persecution a man's priesthood was alone sufficient to condemn him to death, and the majority of the martyrs were secular priests. Many of the clergy are still educated in these English foundations abroad, at Rome, Lisbon and Valladolid. In England the Seminaries are either descended from Cardinal Allen's great College at Douay, or based very largely on its model.

The first group of men trained for the priesthood were the Apostles, and their master was Christ. A careful reading of the Gospels reveals to what a great extent Our Blessed Lord's time was devoted to instructing and training these twelve, who were to exercise his priesthood when he himself had departed from this world. Having chosen them, after a night spent in prayer, he decided that they should remain in his company.[1] He called them not servants but friends because he had made known to them all things heard of his Father.[2] Unlike the rest of his followers who knew only in parables, they were taught more intimately the mysteries of the kingdom of God.[3] They were brought into a close relationship with Christ with a view to being specially trained for their future office, and because this office required them to be witnesses of his life and teaching.[4] They were to be the salt of the earth[5] and, like Christ himself, the light of the world.[6]

It was the desire of the Council of Trent that a very long period should be devoted to this work of priestly

[1] Mark iii, 14.
[2] John xv, 15.
[3] Luke viii, 10.
[4] John xv, 27.
[5] Matt. v, 13.
[6] John viii, 12 ; Matt. v, 14.

training, and the majority of candidates for the priesthood enter a Seminary about the age of fifteen. But in many cases, largely owing to the expense of so prolonged a preparation, the early stages are passed at an ordinary Catholic Secondary School ; boys destined for the priesthood in these schools are the object of special care and attention on the part of the superiors. The earlier discipline of the Church aimed at securing a long period in the Seminary without interruption, but the custom of returning home for the periods of vacation is now almost universal. The Apostles themselves frequently left the immediate companionship of Christ for a short time. Vacations are not times when the work of preparing for the priesthood is suspended. They are, in many respects, a most valuable test of character and a necessary criterion of vocation to the secular priesthood. An unsuitable candidate frequently discovers, during such times, that he is not being called by God. Parents, too, have a certain claim on the companionship of their sons, and they have also a very definite obligation to encourage and strengthen the priestly character that is being slowly built up.

The six years' Seminary training, which precedes ordination, is the substantial equivalent of the time spent by the Apostles with Christ, and candidates for the priesthood closely resemble their Apostolic predecessors in many respects. The Apostles were of mixed origin but poor men predominated. S. Matthew, a tax-gatherer, was wealthy enough to prepare a feast for Our Lord and his disciples ; tradition regards S. Bartholomew as of noble birth and S. Paul was a Roman citizen. Those, however, about whose lives we know most from the New Testament, were poor men of humble birth. Their successors in the priesthood are, like them, drawn from all classes of the population, but those of modest birth have nearly always been in the majority, throughout the

history of the Church. We may, perhaps, ask whether the wealthier classes of the population are doing their share in providing candidates for the priesthood. From their position and education they are sometimes able to appreciate more keenly the defects of the clergy, but they have no title whatever to offer criticism or advice, if they are doing nothing themselves to provide suitable candidates. The priesthood is not the preserve of any one class, and it would be a disaster for the Church were it ever to become so.

As a necessary consequence of lacking personal wealth, the Apostles are frequently mentioned as receiving help from the common purse,[1] and Christ's first care, when he appeared to them on the sea-shore after his Resurrection, was to provide them with a meal.[2] The purse from which their needs were supplied was provided by charitable offerings: holy women and others 'ministered unto them.'[3]

In establishing Seminaries the Council of Trent authorised the bishops to draw on existing ecclesiastical revenues for their upkeep, but the chief source must always be the charity of the faithful. Nowadays, very few families can bear the strain of supporting and educating a son until he reaches manhood's estate. They are, of course, required to do so according to their means. Many of the faithful found 'burses,' or scholarships, for the education of a priest, and a candidate who has reached the priesthood on such assistance has an obligation of gratitude towards these benefactors, especially when they have passed beyond the grave and need the help that he alone can give. Others assist the diocesan fund for ecclesiastical education by donations and legacies, and all the faithful have an opportunity of contributing

[1] E.g. John xiii, 9. [2] John xxi, 12.
[3] Luke viii, 3.

to the periodical collection made in the Churches for this purpose. The support of ecclesiastical students is among the gravest anxieties of the bishops, and one can imagine no more fitting object for the charity of the faithful.

The annual cost of each student is something like £100, but the net cost is usually much more, since candidates may give up aspiring to the priesthood at any stage of their career, up to the subdiaconate. The available statistics of one Seminary in England show that, during a period of ten years, forty-six left before completing two years' training, forty-two after two years, and sixty-three were ordained.[1]

§ 2

The life of a candidate for the priesthood in a Seminary is ruled with a view to sanctifying and fitting him for his future pastoral work as a priest. Spiritual perfection consists essentially in the love of God and of one's neighbour, and everything tending towards the development of divine charity must be practised, not only by priests and religious, but by all Christians desiring to sanctify their souls.[2] In its chief elements, therefore, the manner of life in a Seminary is not something planned or invented by the bishop of the diocese. It is simply an application of the rules of the gospel. The training of a Seminary is longer than that of any novitiate, but its character is not exactly the same. A religious novitiate is given over, almost entirely, to exercises of piety and asceticism and to acquiring the traditions and spirit of the Order. The sanctity required in a priest is greater than that which is necessary for a religious,[3] but the

[1] Hooley, *A Seminary in the Making*, p. 131.
[2] Cf. p. 146 *infra*.
[3] Cf. p. 174 *infra*.

methods adopted for the formation of subjects in a religious Order are not necessary, and often quite unsuitable, for the formation of a parochial clergy. What makes the training of a Seminary entirely distinct is the fact that the priesthood is, by Christ's institution, distinct and separate from all the rest of the faithful[1] whether living in a religious Order or not. Religious profession induces obligations which are not binding on the priesthood, but the priesthood itself comprises obligations which are not, and cannot be, binding on anyone who is not a priest.

Doubtless, to many it would appear that a Seminary is a place for the mental training of future priests in ecclesiastical lore, a school of theology. If by this we understand the study of divine things, namely, everything that brings the human soul to the knowledge and love of God, then the statement is true. But if we mean the acquirement of ecclesiastical knowledge in the sense of a purely intellectual inquiry into such subjects as Theology, Holy Scripture, or Church History, then the statement is only partly true. A minimum degree of intellectual attainment is a *sine qua non* of the priestly vocation; but the process of acquiring such knowledge is only a part of Seminary training, nor is it the most important part. It could be acquired, and perhaps acquired more profoundly, by attending a course of lectures at a University, while pursuing the life of a layman; but this would be inadequate, and is not regarded by the Church as sufficient equipment for the priestly office. Intellectual training does not hold the chief place in the laws of the Church governing the constitution of Seminaries.[2] The primary and essential purpose of the Seminary is to perfect the life of the future priest, by

[1] Cf. p. 17 *supra*.
[2] Cf. Canons 1360, 1367, 1371.

developing in his soul a love of God which shall be lasting and continuous throughout his life, which shall impel him to subordinate his own interests and ambitions to God's interests and the welfare of the Church, and which will urge him to 'spend himself and be spent'[1] for the salvation of souls for whom Christ died. The daily life of the Seminary, the rule followed, and the studies pursued are all ordered to the better attainment of this end.

The basis and foundation of all supernatural union with God is Faith, the firm assent of the mind to everything God has revealed to us through Christ, and which has been carefully preserved by the Church. Time and again did Christ find it necessary to reprove the weak faith of his disciples. Owing to this defect he could foresee the disastrous fall of Judas: 'There are some among you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that did not believe and who he was that should betray him.'[2] Before departing this life, he gave thanks to his Father for the gift of faith in those who, a few moments before, were given a share in his priesthood: 'The words thou gavest to me I have given to them, and they have received them and have known in very deed that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.'[3] The discipline of the Seminary is designed to strengthen and keep alive the simple faith of childhood in God's revelation. It involves not only assent to the truths revealed by God, but also the acceptance of the decisions of the Church which are not, indeed, revealed, but are, as it were, the bulwarks protecting and defending the sacred deposit of faith. The decisions of the supreme authority of the

[1] 2 Cor. xii, 15.
[2] John vi, 65.
[3] John xvii, 8.

Church, whether in biblical studies, moral questions, or devotional practices, are given after careful and expert inquiry, and they concern, at least, the ' opportuneness ' of certain doctrines. To all these decisions and directions the candidate for the priesthood must give a loyal and willing adhesion. In disputed points, on which there is no authoritative decision, he is taught the common and accepted doctrine.

Throughout his life in the Seminary, there is demanded from the candidate for the priesthood an unquestioning obedience to the laws made by the bishop. They are rules which enter closely into the whole of his life. As a priest he will be subject to the bishop of the diocese, to whom he solemnly promises obedience at the time of his ordination, and he cannot begin too early in acquiring this necessary priestly virtue. Christ required it from his Apostles : ' You call me master and you say well, for I am.'[1] He forbade them to enter certain cities and used his authority to reprimand them when necessary. The obedience expected from a student for the priesthood is not merely an external and pharisaical compliance with law, so often condemned by Christ, but a whole-hearted acceptance, on a lofty and supernatural motive, of the life planned out for him. The sublime dignity and obligations of the priesthood would make any man hesitate to seek it, lest he should prove unworthy and insufficiently equipped for the right performance of his priestly duties. In responding to what he believes to be a call of God, a candidate for the priesthood can do no more than offer himself, in spite of his weakness and unworthiness, and submit to the judgement of the Church electing him decisively through the voice of the bishop. The Church has interpreted, in general lines, the kind of life and training required, and all the details

[1] John xiii, 13.

are filled in by episcopal authority. In living at the Seminary in accordance with its rules and regulations, the student is absolutely certain that he is moulding his life as God wishes it to be moulded, with a view to exercising the priestly office worthily. If he does so, without deceiving the competent authorities, conscientiously trying to fit himself for canonical election, he enjoys complete certitude that his vocation is from God. On the other hand, should he pass an undisciplined life at the Seminary, regarding the observance of rules as a battle of wits between himself and the authorities, and should he succeed by superior skill in escaping detection, he cannot enjoy this certitude about his vocation. He is called to the office because, failing any proof to the contrary, he is supposed to have fitted himself by a period of careful discipline. The bishop is forbidden by Apostolic injunction to lay hands lightly on any man. He must be satisfied of the candidate's fitness before he ordains him, and he makes a favourable judgement because he thinks the ordinand has shaped his life and character on the rules of the Seminary. In this he may have been lamentably deceived. Moreover, an element of injustice accompanies this deception, for a candidate enters the house with an implicit undertaking that the rules will be observed.

The whole matter of obedience to just laws is one which enters closely into the life of any Christian trying to save his soul. In journeying towards God, his last end, man is assisted interiorly by grace and directed externally by law. It is a friend, not an enemy to be circumvented and defeated. The Christian concept of law is utterly at variance with the modern desire for complete independence from all control and government. This is not freedom but license. What is true of the law of God in general, is true—in all due proportion—of the ecclesiastical government of the Seminary. There

is not the slightest doubt that the ecclesiastical student who avoids the obligations of his state, and by a studied deception reaches the priesthood, is doing grave wrong.

A proper, honest and supernatural outlook on the rules governing his life, and an habitual observance of them, is consistent with an occasional breach of rule, due entirely to the light-heartedness of youth, or the passing pleasure obtained by a little deviation from the path of severe rectitude. *In humanis versamur*. I know of no one who would maintain that a breach of the rules of a Seminary is, in every case, a sin. If, as occasionally happens, the discovery of a grave breach of rule results in the refusal of Orders to a student, it is because the responsible superior has formed the judgement that he is ill-disposed towards his solemn obligations, and cannot therefore safely be allowed to assume the much graver obligations of the priesthood. In general, the non-observance of the rules and obligations of his life is met by reprimand or warning, and the student learns to accept the rebuke cheerfully and even gratefully; he will receive many such rebukes from lawful authority in the course of his life as a priest.

Many of these rules turn on securing a thorough and earnest application of the mind to study. In addition to the ordinary elements of a sound education, a candidate requires a fairly extensive knowledge of Latin before he can begin the study of Philosophy and Theology. A man who offers himself for the priesthood late in life, and who knows no Latin, may have to devote some time to its study before beginning Philosophy. The difficulty, however great it may appear, will yield to steady serious application. Some of the best candidates, especially since the war, have begun their studies for the priesthood with this initial drawback, and special arrangements are made for this class of student. The philosophical and theological course covers a period of six years. The two

years devoted to Philosophy consist of a rational inquiry into such subjects as Logic and Metaphysics, Psychology, Theory of Knowledge, Cosmology, Ethics and Natural Theology. The four years' Divinity course includes, besides Dogmatic and Moral Theology, the study of the Holy Scriptures, Church History, Canon Law and Liturgy. It is a very full programme of studies and the degree in which a knowledge of these subjects is obtained varies, of course, with the individual.

Throughout the course of Philosophy and Theology, the object is to supply the future priest with a solid and sound intellectual basis, which will be of service to him throughout his life. His studies are directed according to the principles of S. Thomas and the age-long traditions of the Church. The training develops an attitude of mind which ' thinks with the Church,' not only in matters the denial of which would be heresy, but in accepting the general policy and direction of authority with unswerving loyalty. This attitude is the very reverse of the tendency, rather rife at the moment in non-religious movements, of criticising and rejecting whatever has stood the test of time. More often than not, this is due to a kind of lust to be original and unconventional at all costs, to say smart things and hold destructive opinions, solely in order to be independent and break away from the common herd. It is a phenomenon of extreme youth and inexperience, a state of mental puberty which sometimes persists beyond the years of youth in an uncultured mind, owing to simple ignorance of what our forefathers have done and thought.

In order, therefore, that the future priest may grow up, steeped in the priceless traditions of the Church and imbued with her outlook and point of view, he is shielded from many of the dangers which may weaken or even ruin his faith. Engaged as he is, to the full capacity of his powers and time, in positive study of a constructive

kind, and in moulding his opinions on those of the Church, it is undesirable that he should fritter away his energies in the perusal of bookish novelties, current periodicals and newspapers, which are usually concerned with issues that are ephemeral and slight. In his studies, modern objections and difficulties find a prominent place, but the first place is given to acquiring a body of positive knowledge and convictions, logically and harmoniously united in one solid erection, as strong as the rock on which the Church is built. With this foundation well established objections and difficulties can be met as they arise, and they can be regarded in their due proportion. From this point of view the training of a Seminary is different from that often obtained in some modern Universities. The minds of many young graduates are often filled with propositions on a variety of topics, but they have not usually studied the reason and the basis on which they are held. They are views rather than convictions, and induce a frame of mind that is swayed by every new current of fresh opinion, a danger of which S. Paul found it necessary to utter a warning.[1] Seminary discipline is not a policy of concealment and obscurantism; Christ himself did not conceal from the Apostles the dangers and the opposition they would meet with, by reason of their faith in him. It is simply the positive and constructive type of training, without which a priest would be ill-equipped for the pastoral office, and an indifferent representative of a Church that claims to teach without fear of error.

Even the study of Apologetics, the examination of the evidence adduced in proving the truth of Christianity and the divine mission of the Church, is concerned with the constructive positive notions of religion and Christianity, the establishment and

[1] Eph. iv, 14.

constitution of the Church, and the sources of revelation. The position of Protestant sects, the various theories of Anglicans, the validity of their Orders, the rights and wrongs of the Prayer Book controversy, receive some attention, but it is of a secondary nature. Such trifling issues as the individual views of Protestant scholars receive scarcely any treatment at all in the professional study of Apologetics in Seminaries. Later on in life, when the principles have been well and truly laid, a priest may interest himself in one or other of these questions. Whatever may be the importance given to such passing topics in the press, the Schools of the Catholic Church are not unduly perturbed whenever a non-Catholic divine resuscitates Arianism or some other ancient heresy.

Every student is required to apply himself to the course of studies in the Seminary with all the energy of which he is capable. Periodical examinations provide a test as to whether the minimum knowledge has been obtained. Of more importance than intellectual brilliance is steady application and the willingness to study even uncongenial subjects. Often, in the Gospels, we see the Apostles approaching Christ in a spirit of earnest inquiry: 'Expound to us this parable.'[1] 'Why do the Pharisees and scribes say that Elias must come first?[2] 'Are there few that shall be saved?'[3] Their master and teacher often lamented their lack of understanding, but they were at least keen about everything concerning Christ's teaching, and they were also endowed with sound common sense and an appreciation of the practical issues of life. Seminary training does not develop the type of scholar so often caricatured: absent-minded and unkempt, of

[1] Matt. xiii, 36; xv, 15.
[2] Mark ix, 10.
[3] Luke xiii, 23.

a crabbed and wizened appearance, interested solely in variant readings of ancient texts, a *rat de bibliothèque*. The type is found, of course, but it is not the result of Seminary life.

§ 3

Of far more importance than the studies, though they assist indirectly in its growth, is the development of the spiritual life which will, in the course of a few years, be exercised in the sacred functions of the priesthood. Even among the Apostles, material and earthly ideas and ambitions predominated at first ; they expected Christ's kingdom to be a worldly one of power and prosperity ; self-interest manifested itself in petty quarrels concerning rights of precedence, even on the night of the Last Supper ;[1] they were alarmed at Christ foretelling his passion and death. Fear for their own safety led them to abandon Christ altogether at the end. In a word, they were very imperfect until the work of Christ, in forming their priestly lives, had been completed by the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. All these defects are quite natural human failings and the work of preparing for the priesthood, and acquiring the sanctity which it demands, consists in a gradual purifying of ideals and motives, in order that one's own preferences and interests may be subjected to the interests of Christ and the Church. Self-love in all its various aspects has to yield to the love of God. To what extent this is actually attained by the individual is known only to God. It is at least the ideal put before the candidate for the priesthood, and it is an ideal which is perfectly attained by numbers of the secular clergy, living in poor

[1] Cf. Mark ix, 33 ; Luke xxii, 34.

and depressing surroundings ; prepared to do any work, no matter how unattractive, at the desire of the bishop ; with no taste for self-advertisement even in things ecclesiastical ; not seeking preferment and honour amongst men, but quietly and perseveringly attending to the work the bishop has given them to do :

> He sette not his benefice to hire,
> And let his sheep accumbred in the mire,
> And ran unto London, unto Saint Poul's,
> To seeken him a chantery for souls,
> Or with a brotherhood to be withold :
> But dwelt at home, and kepte well his fold.[1]

By what method does the Seminary attempt to develop the attainment of this priestly spirit, or at least to sow the seeds of it ? for the place, as its name implies, is only a seed ground. ' I have sown, Apollo hath watered, but God has given the increase.'[2] Some candidates for the priesthood are, undoubtedly, self-centred and self-interested even in spiritual things. Their first conception of the priesthood is of something for themselves, and the truth that the priest is ordained, not for himself but ' for men,'[3] lies dormant in their minds. Some may, unhappily, never succeed in practically realising this supreme truth. They may develop into that most odious of ecclesiastics, the man seeking for promotion, using every occult intrigue and influence to promote his own interests, jealous of his fellows and embittered at their success. The most important part of priestly training is turned towards developing the idea that the priest is ordained, primarily, in order to give his life and energies to the

[1] Chaucer, *Prologue*.
[2] 1 Cor. iii, 6.
[3] Heb. v, 1.

service of others. This zeal and activity is based on a purely supernatural motive : its spring and source is the love of God operating and expanding in a life devoted to fraternal charity. The sanctity of a priest consists, as does all sanctity, in a close union of the soul with Christ. According to the nature of one's state of life this end is achieved by various means : in the case of married persons, by performing perfectly the duties of their state, which represents the union between the Church and Christ ;[1] in the case of those who have taken the vows of religion, by keeping those vows, which are most useful means for attaining perfect union with God. In the priesthood, the means of sanctification are the perfect exercise of the priestly functions in the service of God and of men. This essential idea is kept before the candidate in a Seminary by the obligations of his life. Many of these, for example, intensive study, tend towards what appears at first sight an excessive self-culture. But all these studies are undertaken with a view to the priestly office of teaching men in the name of Christ, not for personal satisfaction. So important is this fact that, in some Seminaries, the results of examinations are not published, simply in order to prevent the possible self-complacency of a clever student, lest he should imperceptibly come to regard these results as an adornment of his own. He is also expected, should he be quicker and more capable than his fellows, to employ his gifts in assisting less brilliant students, by helping them in difficulties, lending them his own notes taken in lectures, and assisting them in preparing for examinations. A strong and well-developed tradition of this kind, in any Seminary, is among the most evident signs that the house is doing its work in training priests, and is not a mere house of studies.

[1] Eph. v, 25.

The Seminarist is also required to undertake any public office given to him for the common good of the house. The work of Sacristans, Librarians and other public offices of any large ecclesiastical establishment, involves laborious work which is of no personal assistance to him who has it to do. It may be very distasteful and appear to be rather a hindrance to his own personal good, whether in study or in spiritual things. Nearly always, waiting in the refectory is a work undertaken by the students themselves. Any marked unwillingness or resentment at being required to do any of this work, for the common good, is a most useful indication that the candidate has not yet begun to understand the meaning of the priestly life.

The daily life of a modern Seminary is not unduly severe. As the world grows older many practices and hardships, experienced by our forefathers, yield to a greater degree of comfort. This is noticeable in every walk of life, and the Seminary is no exception. Nevertheless, there are hardships occasionally to be endured, things not intended or foreseen by those in authority, and which are inevitable in any large community. Such common necessities as food and drink and heating may often fall very considerably below the standard enjoyed by the world at large ; there may be quite a number of other discomforts and grievances arising from day to day. These things are no part of the settled rule and training of the house, but they have to be endured cheerfully. Any legitimate grievance of a more or less permanent character receives, of course, sympathetic attention from those in authority. But what is not tolerated is the attitude on the part of a student who jealously guards the measure of comfort due to him, instantly airs the slightest grievance, and is in an habitual state of querulous complaint. In a lengthy description of those unsuited for the secular priesthood, Canon Law

places first the 'discontented.'[1] As a priest, he will enjoy ordinary, decent comfort, but his life necessarily entails a willingness to submit cheerfully to personal inconvenience and discomfort, should his office and the care of souls require it.

Of equal importance, and rather more difficult to secure, is the kind of unselfishness which is alive to the need others have of friendship and kindness. The lack of this quality, which is often more apparent than real, reveals the difference between a man who is approachable and friendly to all, and one who reserves his friendship for a chosen few. Very often it is purely unintentional, and a priest may reach old age without understanding why the mass of the people regard him as rather dour and unfriendly. But it may be due to a serious defect, the lack of fraternal charity. The love of other men for the sake of Christ is at the basis of all priestly zeal for souls, and if this is lacking nothing can take its place.

Much of a Seminarist's life is occupied in activities shared in common. But it is especially during recreation and free time that he is expected to show a proper regard for others. He is not allowed to absent himself habitually from the common recreations of the community. In some houses companions for walks are expressly allotted, but the common practice in England is to allow considerable liberty of choice. He is, nevertheless, expected not to make one particular person his constant companion to the exclusion of everyone else. Close, intimate and individual friendships are always formed at the Seminary, and are amongst the most valuable assets and safeguards of the priestly life. The spirit which requires a young

[1] Canon 1371; 'E seminario dimittantur dyscoli . . .' δύσκολος means primarily a person discontented with his food but is applied, in a general sense, to anyone habitually hard to please. *V.* Liddell & Scott.

man to be friendly with all his companions is quite consistent with the existence of more intimate associations with particular persons, and the observance of such a rule is of the greatest value in the formation of a generous sympathy which impels a man 'to become all things to all men.' The authorities of the house encourage the union of all on common terms of intimacy, by mixing the students together in the refectory and Common Room, and also, on occasion, by pointing out to an individual his failings in this important respect.

It is by such means as these that there is gradually formed a broad fraternal charity, of the active operative kind, which will continue after ordination and develop in active work in the care of souls. The Apostles, during the course of their own training for the priesthood, were sent by Christ on periodical spells of active work and preached among the people. For various reasons this is not part of the modern Seminary training, as it exists at present, although there is always a certain amount of charitable work to be undertaken amongst the Catholics in the neighbourhood. The first Conference of S. Vincent de Paul in this country was begun in a Seminary. But the principle and substance of charity towards others, as a means of self-sanctification, is secured chiefly by the relations existing between the students themselves. On the night before his betrayal and death Christ Our Lord seemed weighed down with anxiety, lest his little band of priests should be wanting in love for each other, and the burden of his discourse in S. John[1] is very largely concerned with leaving them the last injunction that they love one another as he had loved them. Without this precious principle of charity operating throughout the whole priestly life, the most vigorous energy will be as 'sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.'[2]

[1] xiv–xvi. [2] 1 Cor. xiii, 1.

There remains the one activity of the life of a candidate for the priesthood, which unifies and directs everything he is doing, whether in study, in observing rules, in practising fraternal charity, or in eliminating sinful habits. It is the quiet and secret union of his soul with God in prayer. The Seminarist shares in the full and solemn liturgical prayer of the Church, during Seminary life, in a manner which will scarcely ever be equalled during his missionary life as a priest ; corporate public prayer and devotions also occupy a prominent place.

But it is the daily period of mental prayer which will be found most fruitful in developing the spiritual life, although exactly the same principle should underlie every effort to raise the mind to God, whether it be performed publicly or privately, liturgically or non-liturgically. By turning the intelligence to the contemplation of divine things, in mental prayer, the sole object is to stir up the affections and aspirations of the heart and will towards God, in acts of adoration, thanksgiving, contrition, supplication and, especially, love of God. The primary object of such prayer is not to acquire knowledge, nor is it self-examination, but the first enters in as a necessary preliminary to the desires of the will, and the second as a necessary consequence. The practical resolution which must be the issue of mental prayer tests, as it were, the truth and the reality of the aspirations the soul has tried to direct towards God ; it is concerned with the elimination of sin, the proper performance of daily duties and the practice of fraternal charity.

It is chiefly by this means that a candidate for the priesthood will acquire the virtues proper to his state, and grow in the holiness obligatory on the priesthood. It is by this means that the love of Christ will begin to unfold itself in his life. The personal love of the Apostles for their master was the beginning and the completion of their leaving everything else to follow him. This

mutual love was the one thing Christ desired above all else. He claimed it and received it, and, with the one unhappy exception of Judas, he succeeded in retaining it. The love of Christ is common to every profession of the Christian life, but in the priesthood it is, on Christ's side, more close and intimate. They are his men, not his servants but his friends,[1] sharing the prerogatives of his priesthood ; as a consequence it must also be, on the priest's side, more close and intimate than in any other state of life. The degree in which this is attained by individuals is the degree and measure, both of their own sanctity, and of their activities in Christ's interests. Who can measure and define the extent of Divine Charity ? It is attained eminently by some, it may grow weak and vanish altogether in others. The most that can be humanly done, in the work of preparing for the priesthood, is to keep constantly before the future priest the grave obligation which will lie upon him to tend, with all his powers, towards a more and more perfect love of Christ, not as a thing which he may accept or reject, nor in that measure which all Christians must show in their lives, but as something which is demanded from him in an eminent degree, because he is a priest, and solely because he is a priest.

[1] John xv, 15.

CHAPTER VIII[1]

PRIESTLY PERFECTION

A YOUNG man who believes he is being called by God to the priesthood will sometimes, in the course of the long years of his preparation, experience periods of doubt and perplexity. He may wonder whether the priestly life and obligations are beyond his strength, or whether he is sufficiently advanced in holiness to undertake an office which will bring him into such close and intimate contact with Christ. Such hesitations as these are good, and even necessary. They betray an essential humility of soul, and a reverence for the priesthood, which are among the chief safeguards of the sacerdotal state. Provided he has not deceived the superiors who are responsible for promoting him to Holy Orders, he may rest secure that the grace of God will assist him throughout his priestly life.

But, occasionally, his perplexity may arise on quite different grounds. He is, let us suppose, young, enthusiastic and generous in his resolve to devote his life perfectly to the service of God, but he has somehow got the impression that he cannot do this unless he enters a religious Order. I am not

[1] The substance of Chapters VIII and IX appeared first in *The Ecclesiastical Review*, June 1925, to the proprietors of which my thanks are due for the permission to reprint in an expanded form.

referring to a man who has clear and definite signs of a religious vocation; nor to one who, for various reasons, finds the life of the diocesan clergy unattractive; nor to one whose character seems to demand the safeguards of a religious rule of life. For all of these there may exist the strongest grounds for approaching the clerical state in a regular Order. But I have in mind one who is seriously striving for the holiness 'without which no man can see God.'[1] He realises the instability of human purpose and wishes to bind himself to the attainment of perfection; he knows that a religious is so bound, but he thinks a priest, as such, is not.

This outlook gives rise to considerations of the very first importance. At the outset, we should have to lower the standard placed before a candidate for the priesthood in a Seminary; we should have to admit that this standard is only 'second best'; that in becoming a priest a man is only going half-way, and if he wishes to go the whole way he should aim at something more worthy and holy than the priestly state. It would follow, as a natural consequence, that the great body of the priesthood, which is, and must always be, the diocesan clergy working immediately under episcopal control, would be filled with men whose ideals are indifferent, and whose obligations merely consist in performing their functions adequately, and keeping in a state of grace. To anyone suggesting a greater perfection of life they would answer: 'We are only priests, not religious,' and the answer would be full and complete. Is this what Christ had in mind when he called his first priests the light of the world and the salt of the earth?

[1] Heb. xii, 14.

§ 1

In order to make the doctrine intelligible we must first understand what is meant by ' perfection.' The perfection of a Christian soul, as of every other object, consists in the attainment of its end. The possession of other qualities, which are merely external and accidental to its nature, may contribute to the perfection of a thing under a certain aspect, but they are to be carefully distinguished from its essential perfection. Thus, a musical instrument is essentially perfect if its tone and action leave nothing to be desired ; the beautiful finish and polish of a piano contribute to its desirability, but, if the essential qualities are lacking, these accidental features may be merely ridiculous. So it is if we consider the perfection of a human soul : the possession of all the virtues contributes to its beauty under various aspects, but its essential perfection lies in union with God by charity, the love of God expanding in love towards others.[1] The acquisition of the other virtues, even when one takes public vows to practise them, does not perfect

[1] ' Unumquodque dicitur esse perfectum inquantum attingit proprium finem . . . caritas autem est qui unit nos Deo, qui est ultimus finis humanae vitae . . . et ideo secundum caritatem specialiter attenditur perfectio Christianae vitae.' (*Summa Theol.*, II–II, 184, 1.) ' Dupliciter potest dici aliquis perfectus : uno modo simpliciter, quae quidem perfectio attenditur secundum id quod pertinet ad ipsam rei naturam ; puta si dicatur animal perfectum, quando nihil ei deficit . . . . . ad vitam animalis : alio modo dicitur aliquid perfectum secundum quid : quae quidem perfectio attenditur secundum aliquid exterius jacens : puta in albedine. . . . Vita autem Christiana specialiter in caritate consistit per quam anima Deo conjungiter . . . et ideo secundum caritatem attenditur simpliciter perfectio vitae Christianae, sed secundum alias virtutes secundum quid.' (*Ib.*, *ad* 2.)

the soul unless charity is present. It is the familiar doctrine expressed by S. Paul in so trenchant a manner in the Epistle read on Quinquagesima Sunday: 'If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.'[1] It is expressed by the theologian in the classic thesis that charity is the 'form' of all the virtues. Owing to the fact that many spiritual books and guides are concerned, primarily, with the direction of souls who have undertaken to perfect themselves in the monastic or religious life, the virtues proper to that state, as accidental, instrumental means of perfection, assume such an importance that they are liable to be confused with perfection itself. It was the chief work of S. Francis de Sales, in his books and letters, to put his readers on their guard against falling into this error. Spiritual perfection is open to all and is not the monopoly of any one class of persons. 'It has happened that many have lost perfection in the solitude which is so desirable for it, and have preserved it amongst the multitude.'[2]

The Church of God, the Body of Christ, is an organic whole, and a variety of functions have to be performed by its members. Some are called to this office and some to that, some *choose* the religious life, others *are chosen* for the priesthood. But all are called to perfection, in the love of God, though the same means are neither necessary for all nor advantageous to the common good. 'Without charity the outward work profiteth nothing, but whatever is done out of charity, be it never so little and contemptible, all becomes fruitful. He does much who loves much. He does much who does well what he doth. He doth well who regards the common good rather than his own will.'[3]

[1] 1 Cor. xiii, 3.
[2] *Devout Life*, I, c. 3.
[3] *Imitation*, Bk. I, c. 15.

In the attainment of perfection by charity there are many degrees. There is a minimum which is obligatory for all, if they would save their souls, and there is a maximum representing the highest perfection attainable in this world by human creatures.

The perfection necessary for salvation, and therefore obligatory on all, is that degree of divine charity which secures the observance of the commandments to the extent of avoiding mortal sin. 'If you love me keep my commandments.'[1] They are reduced ultimately to the two great commandments of the law: love of God and love of one's neighbour. The intimate union between mortal sin and the rejection of God's love, difficult though it may be to perceive, is of capital importance for appreciating the difference between mortal and venial sin.[2] The modern study of Moral Theology is very largely concerned with determining this difference in various human actions. Bishop Ullathorne once described it as the science of discovering the least amount of obligation consistent with an easy conscience, and, in an age of specialised study, it may, perhaps, be necessary to restrict it somewhat on these lines. But we cannot help regretting the passing of a broader view of Moral Theology, as found in the Summa of S. Thomas, which traces with magisterial skill the whole movement of the rational creature towards God, issuing in the highest mystical union with him.

When, accordingly, we speak of 'perfection' in the sense of a special obligation, we are not discussing the minimum degree which consists in the avoidance of mortal sin. We refer rather to the process of carrying the two-fold precept of charity far beyond these narrow

[1] John xiv, 15.

[2] See *Sin and Repentance*, Treasury of the Faith Series, pp. 17 and 73.

limits. The difference is one not of kind but of degree. There is a degree, for example, in which the commandment of fraternal charity binds under pain of sin : as the theologians say, *sub praecepto*. Beyond this degree it is a counsel of perfection, *sub consilio*. It will be perceived at once that the word ' counsel,' in this connection, has a meaning rather different from its restricted use as implying one of the three counsels which are commonly the object of religious vows, namely, poverty, chastity and obedience.[1] These three virtues are most valuable instrumental means for the acquisition of perfect charity, but they are not necessary means. A sacred obligation to practise the counsels of perfection may bind certain persons, whose state of life is inconsistent with one or other of these vows. A religious, for example, who is elevated to the episcopate, enters a state of perfection higher than the religious state ; but his vow of poverty and his vow of obedience to a regular superior are necessarily in abeyance. S. Thomas was engaged in many controversies against those who wished to abolish religious orders or curtail their activities, and he shows, with almost mechanical precision, how useful religious vows are as instrumental means of perfection ; but he carefully demonstrates that they are not necessary means. It is because the proper exercise of the episcopal office requires a superior degree of charity that the episcopate is a higher canonical state of perfection than the religious life.[2]

The point is an important one and has the closest connection with another aspect of spiritual perfection which is often overlooked and forgotten. It is concerned with the comparative value of the contemplative and the

[1] Cf. Vacant, *Dict. Theol.*, I, 2039.

[2] *De Perfectione Vitae Spiritualis*, c. xiv–xvii Parma Ed., Vol. XV, p. 87.

active life. We have the authority of Christ himself for regarding the contemplative prayer of Mary as better than the busy activity of Martha. But a life which is able to combine the two is the most perfect of all. It is the life of a man who, inspired with the love of Christ by contemplation, expands in laborious activity for his fellow-men who are members of Christ's body; it is the sublime perfection of S. Paul who, in contemplating divine things, was lifted to the third heaven and heard secret things not given to man to utter, yet was willing to become anathema from Christ for the sake of his brethren; the Apostolic spirit of S. Francis Xavier and the great missionary saints; the extraordinary life of the Curé of Ars, the parish priest who was forced to regard his attraction towards a life entirely devoted to contemplation in a religious Order as a temptation of the devil. It was the life of one, greater than all these Saints, who told us to follow after him and be perfect.[1]

What is the reason for this fine and grandiose concept of the height of spiritual perfection? It is because, in the harmonious union of the two lives, the contemplative and the active, there is found a full and perfect realisation of the two great commandments of the law. Such perfection as this may be seldom reached, owing to the fact that a life of external activity is rarely inspired and motived entirely by the perfect love of God, and by that transforming union of the soul with him which is the goal of contemplation. But there is a state of life which does offer all the means for arriving at this summit of perfection, namely, the priesthood when joined to the care of souls.[2] Such a priest is brought into an intimate and daily contact with Christ in the Holy Eucharist, an action which demands

[1] Cf. *Summa Theol.*, II–II, 182, 2; III, 40, 1, *ad* 2; Butler, *Western Mysticism*, 1922, p. 233.

[2] Note C, § 3, p. 231.

a high degree of sanctity and is, at the same time, the means of attaining it. In the care of souls his whole life is engaged in helping his fellow-men to participate in the most priceless of all good things, the supernatural grace of God.

§ 2

It has been necessary to describe, in general terms, the true meaning of spiritual perfection, in order to understand what is meant by saying that the priesthood carries with it an obligation to sanctity, which is of greater binding force than that to which all the faithful are bound. We must, however, make one further reflection. A person who, on whatever principle, is bound to attain a high degree of perfection, fulfils the obligation by tending towards it, and he cannot say at any period that this objective has been reached: 'Not as though I had already attained or were already perfect: but I follow after if I may by any means apprehend. . . . One thing I do: forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press forward to the mark, and to the prize of my supernal vocation in Christ Jesus.'[1] One who is under a special obligation to attain perfection has this set before him as the terminus of his endeavour, but the degree of its actual attainment will differ with the individual and with one's state of life. When the prayers of the ordination rite declare that a priest must exhibit in his life greater perfection than the laity, or when S. Thomas teaches that greater interior sanctity is required for the priesthood than for the religious life, it is not implied that each of these states has a different objective in tending towards perfection. What is meant is that the degree of actual attainment,

[1] Phil. iii, 12.

required for the fitting performance of the priestly functions, is greater than the degree required for the fitting observance of religious vows, and *a fortiori* for the life of Christians in general.

The priestly obligation to holiness of life is completely different from that of a religious. Its basis is anterior to all ecclesiastical laws, more radical than the ideals of saints who founded religious Orders, of greater permanence than the most solemn vows. It arises from the character of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, which configures the recipient most closely and intimately to Christ our great High-Priest. The priestly power of consecrating and offering the most sacred body of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sacrifice of the Mass, is inseparably connected with his own obligation to personal sanctity. So intimate is the union between the priest and Christ that the Fathers have not hesitated to identify them, for the words he utters are not 'This is the Body of Christ' but 'This is my Body'; not simply 'May Christ absolve you' but 'I absolve you.' The obligation to sanctity assumed with so stupendous an office does not compare, even faintly and remotely, with the obligation arising from vows. 'They shall be holy to their God and shall not profane his name: for they offer the burnt offering of the Lord, and the bread of their God, and therefore they shall be holy.'[1] If the priesthood of the Old Law, a shadow of the good things to come, bound its members to holiness of life, how much more does that of the New Law, because of its close intimacy with the real Body of Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

There is, in addition, the further line of priestly obligation to sanctity which arises from his relation to the mystical Body of Christ, the members of the Church. As the minister of the Sacrament of Penance, he not

[1] Lev. xxii, 6.

merely absolves from sin : he is expected to be the guide and physician of souls in directing their path towards holiness. How can he do this unless he is himself holy ? Can the blind lead the blind ? He is the teacher of the faithful, showing them the way of God in truth, but his words will be wasted unless he supports them by his own shining example, as the light of the world. Like the Apostles themselves[1] he is chosen as a witness to Christ, in deed as well as in word. To him the faithful look to see reflected, no matter how imperfectly, the model of Christ.

A high state of perfection is, therefore, presupposed in the priest, and if it is lacking he is bound by his priesthood alone to make good the defect. The obligation arises from his nearness to Christ in the Holy Eucharist, and from the priestly relations existing between himself and the faithful in general. The canonical state of perfection, which is recognised as the public profession of the three vows in some Order approved by the Church, also induces an obligation to sanctity ; but an exaggerated regard for these vows may very easily obscure the priestly obligation, which, as we shall see in the next chapter, arises from a completely different angle. S. Thomas was engaged in many controversies in repelling attacks made upon religious Orders, but he would not allow the sacred obligations of the priesthood to be whittled away or minimised. There is, in particular, one famous text which really contains in a few words everything that can be said on the subject : ' By Holy Orders a man is dedicated to the most august mysteries, wherein Christ himself is served in the Sacrament of the Altar ; for this there is required a greater interior sanctity than is required for the religious state. For, as Denis says : the monastic order must follow priestly orders, and by

[1] Acts i, 8.

imitating them ascend to divine things. Whence, other things being equal, a cleric in Holy Orders, by doing things inconsistent with sanctity, sins more grievously than a religious who is not in Holy Orders : although such a religious may be bound to the observance of a rule which is not binding upon clerics in Holy Orders.'[1]

One has only to read through the prayers that have been used for centuries in conferring Holy Orders, to recognise how deeply this truth is ingrained and imbedded in the sacred rites of the Church. By being tonsured, clerics have withdrawn their hearts from the hindrances of the world and the love of secular things. Innocent of hand and clean of heart they are ascending unto the mountain of the Lord, in order to stand in his holy place, and with the surplice they put on the new man who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth.

With each successive step they are solemnly reminded of their obligation to grow in virtue and holiness. The Minor Orders are received on the understanding that the newly ordained will, by the purity of their lives, give an example of holiness to the Church. The *Ostiarius*, who guards the doors of the Church, is required by his words and example to guard also the hearts of the faithful, shutting them to sin and opening them to God. *Lectors* must observe in their deeds the things they read with their lips, teaching, not only by their words, but chiefly by the example of their holiness. Their position, high above the people in the lectern, should always remind them of the height of sanctity in which their whole life must be passed, for ' God is powerful to increase in you the grace of eternal perfection.' The lighted candle carried by an *Acolyte* is a token of that light shining before men, of

[1] See Note B, § 2, p. 223.

which Christ speaks, ' that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is heaven.'[1] They are children of the light henceforth, illuminating by their virtues the whole Church of God, in the service of Christ ' the Light of the world,' and the wine and water they offer for the Sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist is a symbol of the sacrifice of their own lives to God. The *Exorcist* cannot command unclean spirits from the souls of others, unless there is nothing of uncleanness and wickedness in his own.

The *Subdeacon* is bound for ever to the service of God by the vow of Chastity which he takes. Prostrate upon the Sanctuary, during the Litany of the Saints, he is blessed, sanctified and consecrated by the ordaining Bishop. His office brings him into close contact with the altar on which the sacrifice of the Mass is offered, and the words of the rite introduce for the first time the obligation to perfection arising on this sacred title, which will receive its completion and fullest expression in conferring the priesthood. For the altar, as S. John witnessed in the Apocalypse, is Christ, and the furniture of the altar are the faithful people of God. Therefore, the life of the subdeacon must be one that is worthy of the service of Christ and his members. The seven-fold gift of the Holy Spirit is invoked upon him that he may be strengthened in the service of God.

Before the conferring of the *Diaconate* there is a solemn inquiry concerning the worthiness of the candidate's life, and the people are invited to come forward and speak if they have anything to reveal. Throughout the rite a comparison is made between the Levitical order of the Old Testament and the Diaconate of the New, in order to bring out with greater prominence the superior obligations of the latter. ' Be ye clean, ye that carry the

[1] Matt. v, 16.

vessels of the Lord.'[1] They are the heritage and the beloved tribe of God. Conspicuous and distinguished by the grace of their spiritual perfection, every kind of virtue must abound in them, chastity, purity and innocence, that they may be worthy at length of the office of the priesthood.

It would appear, at first sight, that the terms of the Ordinal, in setting forth the obligations of the successive steps towards the priesthood, are so strong that there is scarcely room for any further definition. We must remember, however, that these steps are the gradual approach to the priesthood. The obligation to sanctity assumed with each Order arises partly from the nature of the office bestowed, and partly because the acquisition of priestly sanctity is a gradual development, of which the various Orders are so many stages. The recipient of the lesser Orders is presumed to be approaching the priesthood, and his obligations as a priest are foreshadowed in the stages through which he passes. The prayers used in conferring these different Orders are most beautifully and skilfully framed, with a view to bringing into prominence the sanctity of life required by the nature of the Order received; each one has some connection, more or less immediate, with the Holy Eucharist, and the newly ordained exercise their appropriate office in the Ordination Mass, e.g. a newly ordained subdeacon sings the Epistle, a deacon the Gospel. The newly ordained priests also exercise their priestly function of sacrifice, and celebrate Mass together with the ordaining Bishop; it is the only remaining example of concelebration in the Western Church. Everything, therefore, that the Ordinal contains regarding the priestly obligation to eminent sanctity turns, principally, on the close relation between the priest and

[1] Is. lii, 11.

Christ in the Holy Eucharist, and is expressed in the grave and solemn injunction, which remains indelibly impressed on the priest's mind throughout his life: '*Agnoscite quod agitis, imitamini quod tractatis* . . . Understand what it is that you do, and imitate in your own life the rites you perform: you celebrate the mystery of the death of the Lord; take heed, therefore, that your own body dies to sin and concupiscence, and let the sweet savour of your life delight the Church of God, in order that we who have promoted you to the priesthood, and you who have accepted it, may not be condemned by God but merit his reward.'

The long and repeated insistence on the holiness of life which must accompany the priesthood is no more than a development of this text. It is because God's condemnation will fall on the priest who is not holy that the dignity of the priesthood is to be approached with great dread, 'cum magno timore,' and offered only to those who have long lived a blameless life. Very striking also is the description of the perfect life which a priest must lead, 'perfect in faith and works, *grounded on the love of God and the love of one's neighbour*.'[1] During the Preface, which is the essential form of the Sacrament of Orders, the bishop asks God to confer on the ordinands the dignity of the priesthood, and prays, at the same time, that the spirit of holiness may descend upon them, that their lives may be a pattern of holy living and endowed with every virtue. They receive the priestly vestment, as a symbol of the charity which God will increase and make perfect. It is by this unfailing charity that they may hope to be seen, on the day of God's eternal judgement, grown up as perfect men to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

The words used for so many centuries in bestowing

[1] Cf. p. 150 *supra*.

the priestly character, with its corresponding obligation to perfection, are worth reflecting upon. They place in strong relief the necessity of holiness by supposing it already present, as a pre-requisite for ordination, and they recall in the clearest terms that the love of God, overflowing in love to our neighbour, is the essence of perfection. Fittingly does the whole rite close: 'No longer will I call you my servants but my friends . . . you are my friends if you do what I have commanded you.'

It is abundantly clear from the nature of the priesthood, and the rites accompanying its conferring, that the obligation to sanctity cannot be separated from it. The parting monition of the bishop unites the two, urging the newly ordained to consider well the Orders they have received, and the obligation they have undertaken of leading a holy and a religious life. The clerical obligation to interior sanctity and perfection must not, therefore, be considered as merely an ecclesiastical law superadded to the other duties assumed with the priesthood. It is inseparably connected with the Office in such wise that, unless a priest is holy, he cannot rightly perform the duties of his state.[1]

§ 3

The legislation of the Church does not create and establish this obligation. It merely declares the fact of its existence, when occasion calls for the clergy to be reminded; or else it is concerned with imposing the observance of certain means which are, of their nature,

[1] 'Jus naturae est indispensabile. Hoc autem est de jure naturali ut homo sancta sancte pertractet.' (S. Thomas, IV Sent., d. 24, q. i. Parma VII, p. 894.)

calculated to preserve and foster the holiness of life which the priest professes by accepting the priesthood. In Session XXII, cap. 1, the Council of Trent prefaces its reformatory discipline by stating again that clerics have left the world to lead a higher life, that the faithful look upon them as models to be imitated, and that even the slightest faults are serious in them solely because of their state. The simple truth is repeated in Canon 124: clerics are under an obligation of leading a more holy interior life than those who are not clerics, and they must give to the rest of the faithful an example of virtue.

The observance of certain well-defined means for securing this end is a matter of discipline which may, in some particulars, vary according to the needs of time and place. The vow of chastity, and the obligation of leading a celibate life, is now universal in the Western Church: it was not so always, nor is it now in the East. Priests are also expected to live together a community life, wherever it is possible, as they commonly do in the presbyteries of this country.[1] But is it necessary to point out that, were community life a rigid rule, the work of the Church would be hampered in many parts of the world? Little more than a century ago, when there was one bishop and a handful of priests for the whole of the United States of America, men like Fr. Badin, working alone in the wilds of Kentucky, could not even meet another priest for months on end. In all due proportion, the same circumstances exist in nearly every country which is not completely Catholic. Other means of sanctification, for example, private mental prayer in addition to the recitation of the divine office, are so closely connected with perfection of life that they must be observed everywhere and always.[2]

[1] Canon 134.
[2] Cf. Canon 125.

The teaching of the Church in this important matter is reflected in various local provincial Councils, and the chapter devoted to the subject in the XIIth decree of the IVth Provincial Council of Westminster is worthy of very special attention.

"Those who are not holy must not handle holy things."[1] All the faithful people of Christ are called holy[2] but priests must ascend to the very height of sanctity, "for he who is bound, by reason of his position, to speak sublime things, must exhibit them also in his life."[3] S. Thomas warns us of this dread obligation in terms which echo the admonition of the Catholic Church at the moment when the priesthood is conferred. "Those," he says, "who undertake the ministry of divine things acquire a regal dignity and must be perfect in every virtue."[4] Let priests therefore bear in mind that in them sanctity is presupposed. The degree of sanctity befitting the priesthood, in the judgement of the Church and of God the Author of the Priesthood, is nothing less than a certain resemblance to the High-Priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The priesthood is established in the sight of the world as the living reflection of the life of Jesus, labouring in lonely places, in the stress of poverty and in the face of the opposition of men. The dignity of the priesthood rests on a two-fold title. Priests are the beloved companions of Jesus and have accepted a share in the mission entrusted to him by his Father. "As the Father has sent me, I also send you."[5] They share in his priesthood and possess jurisdiction over his real and his mystical Body. And since God has

[1] Council of Carthage.
[2] 1 Cor. i, 2.
[3] S. Gregory the Great, *Regula Pastoralis*, p. ii, c. 3.
[4] IV Sent., q. xi, § 1.
[5] John xx, 21.

so disposed that the grace of our Redeemer is given to men according to the dignity of their position, and the difficulties attendant on the excellence of their charge, none receive such abundant grace as those friends of Christ our Saviour who share in his Priesthood and mission. . . .'

With the authoritative voice of the Vicar of Christ this same truth has been repeatedly declared. Our present Holy Father, in proclaiming a Jubilee in 1929 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of his priestly ordination, has made the sanctity of the clergy his chief intention. He is echoing the ardent sentiments of his predecessors. In an Encyclical Letter of December 8th, 1902, Leo XIII wrote: 'The Catholic Priesthood, divine in its origin, supernatural in its nature, permanent in its character, is not an institution that can be modified by changes in public opinion. Sharing in the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ, it must continue till the end of the world the mission entrusted by the Eternal Father to his Son: "As the Father has sent me, I also send you."[1] The mandate of the priesthood is to effect the eternal salvation of souls and, in order to fulfil this mission, it must rest on supernatural help and be governed by the divine rules of thought and action placed upon it by Jesus Christ, when he sent forth his Apostles into the whole world. The priest, as S. Paul says, is the ambassador and the minister of Christ, the dispenser of the mysteries of God,[2] the mediator between heaven and earth.[3] This is the conception of the Christian Priesthood in the New Testament, an institution of supernatural origin, superior to all others in the world, and separated from them as heaven is separated from earth. This is the great idea of the priesthood which stands out clearly

[1] John xx, 21.
[2] 2 Cor. v, 20; vi, 4; 1 Cor. iv, 1.
[3] Heb. v, 1.

in patristic writings, in the teaching of Roman Pontiffs and bishops, in Conciliar decrees, and in the universal teaching of theologians. Catholic tradition asserts with one voice that the priest is *alter Christus* and that the priesthood is worthy of being placed in the celestial hierarchy, since to its keeping are entrusted functions which even the angels do not enjoy. . . . The priest cannot fully comply with his mighty obligations unless he possesses in abundance the necessary knowledge of divine things, unless he is endowed with that spiritual sanctity which makes him a man of God, and unless he tries with all his power to strengthen his teaching by the example of his own life, according to the words of the Prince of the Apostles "being made a pattern of the flock from the heart."[1] The whole purpose of ecclesiastical education is to form in the candidate for the priesthood the living image of Jesus Christ.'[2]

Pius X, on two occasions, taught the same truths in even more explicit terms. On the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination, he addressed to his brethren in the priesthood words that are deserving of the closest study: 'If a priest is not holy he can no longer be the salt of the earth . . . where sanctity is absent there corruption will set in. . . . If such sanctity was demanded in the Old Law from a priesthood which was but a type and a figure, what shall be demanded from us, the victim of whose sacrifice is Christ? . . . It has always been the constant anxiety of the Church to secure this holiness . . . While promoting candidates to the priesthood by long and gradual steps, the Church, like a careful parent, ceases not to warn them of the holiness required in them. They are warned especially by those most grave words: Imitate in your own life the rites you perform. . . .

[1] 1 Peter v, 3.
[2] *Coll. Brug.*, 1903, p. 73.

Saints, fathers and theologians all agree in this, that the difference between a priest and any other worthy man is the difference between heaven and earth ; for this reason priestly virtue demands the absence, not only of grave sins, but of the slightest faults. There are some who think and teach that the whole value of a priest consists in the fact that he devotes himself to the needs of others. How fallacious and disastrous is such a doctrine. Personal sanctity alone will make us the kind of men demanded by our divine vocation : men crucified to the world, men to whom the things of the world are dead, men walking in newness of life.'[1] On a later occasion he spoke similar words to an association of priests known as the ' Apostolic Union.'[2]

§ 4

Such utterances as these do no more than repeat the traditional doctrine of the Church, as witnessed in the writings of Fathers, Saints and theologians. There exist many books which analyse and develop these sources as, for example, the works of the Sulpician M. Tronson,[3] which are a mine of valuable references and texts. But there are two books worthy of special mention owing to their antiquity, the eminence of their authors, and the reverence with which they have always been held in the Church : *The Priesthood* by S. John Chrysostom, and *The Pastoral Rule* by S. Gregory the Great. S. John Chrysostom wrote his book about 381, when he was as yet only a deacon, in order to explain and justify his refusal of the episcopate which was eventually conferred on his friend Basil. It is in the form of a dialogue between

[1] *Haerent Animo*, August 4th, 1908.
[2] *Acta Ap. Sedis*, IV, p. 1912.
[3] Migne Edition, 1857, in two volumes.

these two friends, in the course of which he gives a description of the priesthood and its obligations which has ever since been regarded as a classic in Christian literature. The priest must be as pure as if he stood in heaven, purer than the sun's rays. He has to be a man with a greater spiritual detachment than monks, a man who while living in contact with the world retains unsullied his sanctity and purity. The people expect from him a high degree of virtue and the smallest fault is noticed by all, commented upon and exaggerated; yet he must have, even for those who calumniate him, a paternal patience and charity. It was because he felt himself wanting in these necessary qualities that S. John Chrysostom wished to decline the burdens of such an office.

S. Gregory the Great, the model of the perfect shepherd of souls, whose zeal was responsible for the conversion of these islands, wrote the *Liber Regulae Pastoralis*, in rather similar circumstances, about 591. It was an explanation of his attempted escape from the Papacy. No one, he says, does more harm to the Church than he whose name and office presuppose sanctity, yet whose personal life is not holy. The pastor of souls is engaged in cleansing and perfecting others and must, therefore, be holy and chaste himself. . . . This famous book was translated into Anglo-Saxon by King Alfred, for the use of the clergy of England, and it is universally known in English-speaking countries to-day from Bishop Hedley's *Lex Levitarum*.

The teaching of theologians on this, as on other doctrines, is largely concerned with formulating more explicitly and more scientifically what is already understood and accepted in the Church. One famous text of S. Thomas has been already mentioned.[1] After S.

[1] P. 153 *supra*.

Thomas the authority of S. Alphonsus is of great weight in determining moral obligation. In discussing the obligation of declining ordination owing to insufficient purity of life, he writes as follows: 'In order that one may receive the dignity of Holy Orders it is not sufficient merely to be in a state of grace, but there is required a condition of moral goodness which is outstanding and habitual. It is evident from the common teaching of Fathers and doctors who unanimously insist upon it that, over and above a state of grace, interior perfection is required for the reception of Holy Orders. "The ordaining bishop, writes S. Thomas,[1] according to the order and office bestowed, must be certain of the qualities of those about to be ordained by making a careful enquiry from others." This is confirmed by the words of S. Denis :[2] "No one must dare to act as a guide of others in divine things unless he is himself habitually and completely transformed by divine grace and like unto God." S. Thomas teaches the same doctrine when he says :[3] "For the proper exercise of the functions of Holy Orders there is required goodness, not in an ordinary degree, but supereminently," and he gives, as the reason, that those who are ordained are placed above the people in rank; they must also be superior to them in sanctity. Soto in the same way declares that the divine law requires positive sanctity in a candidate for Holy Orders :[4] "In defining the degree of fitness required we are concerned, not with those general dispositions required in the recipient of the Sacraments, dispositions which are necessary lest there should exist an obstacle to the grace of the Sacraments . . . but we mean an habitual state

[1] *Summa*, Suppl. 36, 4, *ad* 3.
[2] *De Eccles. Hier.*, cap. 3, § 14.
[3] *Summa*, Suppl. 35, i, *ad* 3.
[4] IV Sent., d. 25, q. i, a. 4.

of sanctity. For, besides receiving grace through the Sacrament of Orders, the recipient is placed in a more sublime state of life, and therefore should exhibit probity of life and resplendent virtue." The same is taught by Sanchez and the Salmanticenses. . . . The ordinand who has been living in a state of sin may show the necessary signs of repentance and be absolved from his sin, but he is not for that reason worthy of receiving Holy Orders : for it is one thing to be in a state of grace and another thing to be leading a life of outstanding goodness.'[1]

The obligation to sanctity incumbent on the priestly state, by the law of God, has always been upheld by the Church, and has been taught insistently by all the spiritual writers who have made the priesthood and its obligations their special concern, for example, Cardinal Manning in *The Eternal Priesthood* and Cardinal Mercier in *La Vie Intérieure*. Unfortunately, there are certain religious writers who, in discussing the obligations arising from various states of life, either pass over this subject entirely or are content to enumerate certain things which the clergy must not do : clamorous hunting, for example, or the frequentation of taverns. At the same time, they enlarge on the obligation to sanctity arising from vows. It may be that they are led unconsciously into this curious attitude from a very proper pride and affection for the religious Orders to which they may belong. Some have even compared the sacred obligations of the priesthood with those of a religious who is not a priest, to the detriment of the former, and explain the great text of S. Thomas in which he teaches, with the whole Catholic Church, that greater interior sanctity is required for the priesthood than for the religious life, by explaining that what S. Thomas had in mind was merely the superior *dignity* of a priest compared to a religious.[2]

[1] *Theol. Moral.*, VI, 67. [2] See Note D, § 1.

For the sole purpose of bringing out more clearly the notion of priestly perfection, the following chapter will compare the obligations of priests with those of religious. It is obviously a matter of the gravest importance that candidates for the priesthood should not have an inadequate idea of their solemn obligations, and regard their priesthood as requiring a lesser degree of holiness than that induced by the religious state. 'I know,' writes Cardinal Vaughan, 'that young men in their first fervour often think that the only thing to do is to become a religious. And I know just as well that they often live to see they have made a mistake. God knows I would take thirty-three vows if it were his will, or would raise the Episcopate or the Priesthood. But our Divine Lord instituted both without vows, and ordained them to be the example and law of perfection, the light of the world and the salt of the earth in the law of Charity.'[1]

Any spiritual writer who faithfully represents the teaching of the Church, and the doctrine of Saints and theologians, must of necessity extol the obligations of the priesthood far above those of any religious Order. They echo the teaching of a book which, after the New Testament, is perhaps the one most widely read by the faithful: 'If thou hadst the purity of an angel, and the holiness of S. John the Baptist, thou wouldst not be worthy to receive or handle this sacrament. . . . Take heed to thyself, and see whose ministry has been delivered to thee by the laying on of hands by the bishop. . . . Thou hast not lightened thy burden, but art now tied fast by a stricter bond of discipline, and art bound to a greater perfection of sanctity. A priest ought to be adorned with all virtues, and give the example of a good life to others. His conversation should not be with the vulgar and common ways of men, but with the angels in

[1] Snead-Cox, *Life of Cardinal Vaughan*, I, 332; II, 67.

heaven, or with perfect men on earth.'[1] These familiar words have all the greater force when we remember that they were addressed to religious men, who were already bound to tend towards perfection by their vows.

[1] *Imitation*, Book IV, Ch. 5.

CHAPTER IX

THE SECULAR PRIESTHOOD

IN the previous chapter we examined the priestly obligation to sanctity, and indicated the basis on which this most certain divine law rests. In the popular imagination, however, the idea of a holy and perfect life is, somehow, restricted to those whose lives are spent in a religious Order, and who have taken the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. In order, therefore, to enunciate more clearly the holiness of life required in a priest, a comparison must be made between his state and that of a religious. The two things are really so utterly and completely different that a comparison between them is rather difficult to make, and is liable to be misunderstood as tending towards a want of respect and affection for religious Orders. This is a serious risk for anyone to undertake, and, were it not for the gravity of the issue, one would gladly shirk it altogether. If we have said very little about the religious life and its many sacrifices and obligations, it is not from any lack of appreciation, but simply because the subject-matter of this book is not the religious life but the priesthood. Everyone understands that a religious is bound by vow to tend towards perfection, but not everyone understands that by priestly ordination there is assumed a much stronger obligation to holiness of life. There were times, and not so long ago, when a priest who spoke of the perfection demanded by his state was suspected of

disparaging the regular Orders. It was regarded as 'a sign of opposition to the religious to speak of perfection anywhere outside a religious Order.'[1]

To borrow the words of the Council of Trent, 'we are not ignorant of the splendour and utility which accrue to the Church of God from monasteries piously instituted and rightly administered.'[2] Not only are religious Orders useful, not only do they add to the splendour of the Church, but their work and example are absolutely necessary for the welfare of the Church. The life of prayer in the contemplative Orders is essential for the spiritual activity of the Church in teaching all nations; without the co-operation of the teaching and missionary Orders, it would be well-nigh impossible for the bishops to exercise effectively the pastoral office; it would be difficult to imagine a Christian Europe without the monks of the West. Add to all this the glamour surrounding the great names of SS. Benedict, Dominic, Francis, Ignatius and Alphonsus; one would be foolish and contemptible even to think of minimising the glorious work achieved by the Orders which they brought into being.

But, when their praises have been sung to the highest degree, there remains an Order which is prior to them all in dignity of origin, in priority of institution, and in the sanctity which it demands: the priestly Order of Melchisedech, the ecclesiastical hierarchy of bishops and clergy, which is of immediate divine origin[3] and endowed by Christ himself with the mission and obligation of perpetuating his own priestly office. 'Neither doth any man take the honour to himself but he that is called by God as Aaron was.'[4]

[1] Cf. Letter of Cardinal Manning, *Dublin Review*, 1920, p. 18.

[2] Session XXV, cap. 1.

[3] Canon 108.

[4] Heb. v, 4.

It is in the priestly character, in the qualities it presupposes and in the obligations assumed with it, that the essential difference between the religious state and the priestly state is to be found. It is owing to his union with Christ in the most holy mysteries of the Eucharist that there is required, as S. Thomas teaches, a greater sanctity in the priest than in the religious.[1] It is only by keeping this fundamental distinction in mind that one can have a basis of discussion, for, in these days, many religious are also promoted by the Church to the priesthood. In becoming a priest the religious increases his obligation of leading a holy life. By ordination he enters the priestly Order and, thereupon, assumes those lofty obligations which are binding on the priesthood always and everywhere, whether exercised in a regular Order or in the ranks of the parochial clergy.

Why then continue to discuss an issue which is so clear and evident? We do so because the doctrine is only obscurely perceived by many who desire to test their vocation to the priesthood: they would not, perhaps, formulate their ideas expressly, from an innate reverence for the priestly office, but they have the impression that the difference between the priesthood in a religious Order, and the same priesthood in the clergy of a diocese, is that the former is bound to perfection and the latter is not. They are sometimes encouraged in this error from the views expressed by good religious, clearly not from any desire to dishonour the diocesan clergy, but solely from an exaggerated regard for obligations arising from vows.[2] The misconception, where it exists, will be found to rest on a misunderstanding of two terms: '*secular* priest' and '*state* of perfection.'

[1] *Summa Theol.*, II-II, 84, 8, p. 153 *supra*.
[2] Cf. Note D.

§ 1

'Perfection,' as we have already seen, consists uniquely in union with God by charity, i.e. in the habitual observance, as perfectly as possible, of the two-fold divine precept, which commands us to love God above all things and our neighbour for his sake. By a generous co-operation with God's grace it is possible for any Christian man or woman to attain this perfect state of divine love. The term 'state of perfection,' however, has a technical canonical meaning. It is a legal or juridical concept, determined by the visible external elements which compose it, elements which imply certain external rights and obligations sanctioned by the Church, which is a visible society. Amongst spiritual writers the fact is always pointed out—it is a commonplace—that being in a 'state of perfection' does not imply being perfect. 'Some are in the state of perfection who are completely lacking in grace and charity, as bad bishops or bad religious. . . . It is written in 1 Kings xvi, 7, that "man seeth those things that appear but the Lord beholdeth the heart." Therefore, the spiritual state of a man with regard to the judgement of God depends on his interior dispositions, but the spiritual state of a man with regard to the Church depends on the external things which are done. It is in this latter sense that we are now speaking of *states*.'[1]

In this sense of the word it has been recognised, since the thirteenth century, that vows taken in a religious Order constitute a state of perfection. The three vows, which are most powerful instrumental means of attaining interior perfection, constitute the person who professes them, within a religious Order publicly approved by the Church, in the canonical state of perfection. It is defined

[1] *Summa Theol.*, II–II, 184, art. 4.

in Canon 487 as ' the firmly established manner of living in community, by which the faithful undertake to observe, not only the ordinary precepts, but also the evangelical counsels by means of the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.' It is a canonical state because it exhibits publicly a certain stability of life, together with the obligation of observing certain well-defined means calculated to assist souls in their union with God by charity.

A person joins a religious Order with a view to attaining perfection, by using the means which are offered to him, and by following the rule of the community in which the vows are taken. The writers on the subject discuss the question to what extent a Christian may be bound to enter religion, if he fears that he will not save his soul in any other way. The case is rather exceptional and unusual. The religious postulant is commonly one who intends, by entering religion, to aim at a high degree of perfection ; realising the instability of human purpose, this resolution is strengthened by vows publicly emitted before the Church, whence arises a state of life in which the religious is bound *to tend towards* the attainment of spiritual perfection, by keeping those vows and by faithfully observing the rules and constitutions of the Order. The vows neither make nor proclaim a religious to be perfect : they are the means freely chosen in order to reach that end more securely. We are accustomed, indeed, to seeing people join religious Orders who are already endowed with a high degree of personal sanctity. But this is not a necessary condition. On the contrary, in the early and most vigorous periods of Western Monasticism, those who joined the family of S. Benedict were anything but saints ; they became so by observing the discipline of the rule. ' Men enter the state of perfection not professing that they are perfect but that they are tending towards that end ; hence there

is no lie or simulation in one who is imperfect assuming the state of perfection.'[1]

With the priesthood the obligation arises from an altogether different angle. Sanctity of life is not presupposed in one who enters religion, whereas in the priesthood it is: 'Sacred Orders presuppose sanctity but the religious state is an exercise for acquiring sanctity; therefore, the obligation arising from Holy Orders is, as it were, something built upon walls already prepared (*literally:* dried) in holiness, but the obligation of religion prepares these walls by removing from the souls of men the humor of vice.'[2] Sanctity is required as a previous condition for the priesthood, because of the intimate union between the priest and Christ, established by the priestly character, and the sublimity of his function in consecrating the Holy Eucharist; also because he is constituted as the teacher, guide, example and perfector of the faithful, among whom the religious are included: 'For this there is required a greater interior sanctity than is required in the religious state. For, as Denis says: the monastic order must follow priestly orders and by imitating them ascend to divine things. Whence, other things being equal, a cleric in Holy Orders sins more grievously, by doing things inconsistent with sanctity, than a religious who is not in Holy Orders: although such a religious may be bound to the observance of a rule which is not binding upon clerics in Holy Orders.'[3]

It is understood, of course, that everything we are trying to say, concerning the relative obligations of the two states, refers not to the individual and personal merits of priests and religious, but to the objective

[1] *Summa Theol.*, II–II, 184, a. 5, *ad* 2.
[2] *Ib.*, 189, 1, *ad* 3.
[3] *Ib.*, 184, 8.

requirements of their respective states. It was only by recalling these sacred principles that M. Olier succeeded in effecting a prodigious change in the status of the French Clergy, during the seventeenth century. 'They are set in the Church to be models of sanctity to all conditions of men; consequently, they ought to possess the graces and the virtues of all other states; religious as well as laity ought to see in them all that is necessary to their own perfection. If priests whose lives are detached from the world are said to live like religious, it is only a sign of the corruption of the age; it ought rather to be said, in the language of the saints, that religious live like priests, seeing that priests are bound to live detached from the world, and religious are bound to imitate the holiness of priests, to follow in their footsteps and sanctify themselves by practising those rules of perfection which were originally given for the clergy.'[1]

There is an interesting letter of S. Augustine, regarding a certain Donatus and his brother, who had departed from a monastery and were seeking ordination elsewhere: 'If those who desert the monasteries are promoted to the ranks of the clergy it is an unworthy affront to the Order of Clerics. In selecting clerics amongst those who live in the monastery, it is our custom to choose only those whose lives are better and more approved. . . . The common people jokingly say about us that a bad monk makes a good cleric. It would be altogether deplorable if we were to raise monks to such a degree of arrogance, or to think the clergy worthy of such an insult, for we ourselves are among the clergy; and it sometimes happens that a good monk will not make a good cleric, even though he possesses sufficient continence, for he may be lacking the necessary training and

[1] Healy Thompson, *Life of M. Olier*, p. 444.

integrity. . . .'[1] S. Jerome speaks in terms equally trenchant : ' Clerics are holy and their lives are worthy of praise. Go, therefore, and live in a monastery that you may be worthy of becoming a cleric, that no sin may soil your youth, that you may go to the altar of God in virginal innocence, and be well-spoken of by all. Later on when you are old enough, should the people or the bishop of the city choose you as a cleric, then live the life of a cleric and imitate the more worthy examples. For in every degree and condition of life the evil are mingled with the good.'[2]

The priestly obligation, therefore, arises from the fact that a man has been chosen for a state of life which requires and presupposes sanctity already attained, whereas the religious obligation arises from choosing a state of life which requires the intention of attaining sanctity. Take an example which, from the nature of the case, can only be analogous and inexact. A medical student who desires a responsible position in a hospital, where the lives of others are in his hands, is under the obligation of equipping himself for the office. If someone obtains the position without possessing the necessary qualifications, his obligation of making good the defect is really much greater ; for his office presupposes an adequate degree of knowledge and without it his life is a lie and a simulation. This is the angle from which priestly sanctity must be regarded. A priest is supposed to have attained a certain degree of holiness on the day of his ordination. If it is absent, the office he has assumed imposes on him a strict obligation to make good the defect, although he is not bound to attain this end by the means proper to the religious life,[3] canonically known as ' the state of perfection.'

[1] Ep. 60. Gaume, *Opera*, II, col. 220.
[2] P. L. xxii, col. 1082. [3] *Summa Theol.*, II–II, 184, 8.

If the priestly obligation to sanctity can only be understood in terms of the religious life, we may follow the Pontifical and call every cleric a religious: 'Be present, O Lord, to our supplications and deign to bless these thy servants on whom, in thy holy name, we place the religious habit.'[1] This, you will say, is merely a verbal quibble. It is. But the statement that, from the point of view of perfection, the religious life is superior to the priesthood, is a far more serious quibble and fraught with the gravest consequences.

May we not, then, maintain that the priesthood, as exercised by the parochial clergy, is to be called a canonical state of perfection, different from the religious state but endowed with all the elements which constitute the juristic concept? There are many illustrious authors of the greatest repute in the Church who answer affirmatively.[2] This aspect of the question is of comparatively slight importance; it is the substance of the doctrine that matters, namely, that there is assumed with the priesthood an obligation to perfection which is greater than that assumed by taking vows in the religious state.

A short examination of the reasons supporting the opinion of these authors will serve, however, to show more exactly the nature of priestly perfection, and the means to be employed for attaining and preserving it. The question is chiefly concerned with the status of the great body of clergy throughout the world, incardinated in a diocese on a title which binds them to spend their lives in the care of souls. The technical notion of 'state' implies a stability of life, undertaken with the external sanction of ecclesiastical law, with a view to observing certain well-defined means, calculated to advance a soul towards perfect union with God. In the religious 'state of perfection' these means

[1] Rite of Conferring the Tonsure.
[2] Cf. Note C.

are the practice of the evangelical counsels, poverty, chastity and obedience, strengthened by vows. The episcopate is beyond all question a canonical state of perfection, and one that is higher than the religious state, precisely because the pastora loffice binds the bishop to the sanctification of the souls committed to his care. It would be erroneous, therefore, to regard the vow of poverty and obedience as essential elements of the state of perfection. For the notion of 'state' all that is required is a stable obligation to practise certain external means of attaining holiness.[1] In the exercise of the functions inseparably connected with the priesthood as such, and quite apart from the various obligations superadded by ecclesiastical law, it would seem evident that in offering Mass, in administering the sacraments as the dispenser of God's mysteries, and in representing Christ as an ambassador of God, the priest has means at his disposal far more powerful than those promised by vow.

In addition to the obligations inherent in the priestly office, which form the chief reason requiring interior sanctity, the laws of the Church impose other 'means of sanctification' which are solemnly accepted with priestly ordination, and which can rightly be considered to constitute him in the technical state of perfection.

There is, in the first place, the vow of chastity taken with the reception of the subdiaconate. This vow is one of the essential elements constituting the religious state, and for this reason S. Thomas seems to incline to the opinion that the priest, in the Western Church, is in a state of perfection.[2] Moreover, the priestly bond is one which, unlike the equivalent vow of chastity in religion, can never be dispensed[3] and, therefore, is of a more permanent and stable character.

[1] 'Obligat se ad ea quae sunt perfectionis,' *Summa Theol.*, II–II, 184, 6.

[2] *Ib.*

[3] Canon 1043.

The solemn promise of obedience to the bishop is another external obligation which, though not indeed a vow, has substantially the same effect in so far as the restriction of personal liberty is concerned. In some ways it is even more absolute than religious obedience, for many Orders have a democratic constitution which enables a given community or province to elect and dismiss their superior at certain intervals. The diocesan clergy, however, are bound to obey whatever bishop is ruling the diocese and they have no choice in his election. Episcopal authority can always be enforced by the appropriate canonical sanction. Were the Church to change the inner nature of this obligation and require a *vow* of obedience from candidates for the priesthood, instead of the solemn promise as contained in the Ordinal, I am sure no one would regard the change as in any way formidable. It would mean, in effect, that disobedience would also be a sin of breaking the vow.

There are many other grave obligations accompanying the priestly life, which are all directed to the sanctification of his soul, and which cannot be omitted without grave sin: for example, the daily recitation of the Office. They are additional reasons for regarding the priestly state as being in substance what is understood as a state of perfection. But the most conclusive point of view which regards this state as proper to the diocesan clergy rests, according to its best exponents, on their participation in the pastoral office of the bishop. It is the universal teaching of the Church that the episcopate is a state of perfection higher than that of religion. It arises from the fulness of the priesthood and more especially from the pastoral office, and it is precisely from this aspect that its canonical 'state' is recognised. The stability of condition, which in the religious life arises from vows, in the episcopate is derived from the bond which unites him permanently to his diocese; and the perfection,

which a religious professes to tend towards by observing his vows, is supposed to be already present in a bishop, since his whole life is spent in perfecting and sanctifying the souls committed to his care. The pastoral office exercised in the care of souls requires perfect charity. ' Simon son of John, lovest thou me more than these . . . feed my sheep.'[1] If this is true there seems no adequate reason why the clergy who, in most countries, are bound permanently to a diocese by reason of their ordination title, should not be considered in a state of perfection. Up to within a few years ago, this obligation of perpetually serving a diocese was known as the ' title of the mission,' and it was strengthened by an oath taken by the candidate in these terms : ' I promise and swear that, when promoted to Holy Orders, I will not, without special permission of the Holy See, enter any religious Order, Society, or Congregation, or make profession in any of them. I also vow and swear that I will labour in the divine ministry for the salvation of souls always in this diocese, under the government and control of the bishop, and that I will do so, even though with the aforesaid permission of the Holy See, I should make my profession in a religious Order. . . . So help me God and these holy Gospels which I touch with my hand.' When England and other places ceased, a few years ago, to be under the Congregation of Propaganda, as missionary countries, and came under the normal constitution of the Church, the mission title and oath was abolished, to the great regret of many priests. The present title of ' service of the diocese ' is the canonical equivalent. Could any human being bind himself more securely to stability of life ? The priest is bound, by the condition of his state, to spend himself for the sanctification of souls in the diocese for which he is ordained, exactly as a

[1] Cf. *Summa Theol.*, II–II, 184, 5.

religious is bound by his rule and vows to tend towards his own personal sanctification. In both cases it is a state of perfection, and, on an analogy with the episcopate, the pastoral office would appear to be a higher state than that of religion.

Moreover, in the episcopate there is a state of perfection without a vow of poverty, and it would follow, as a necessary consequence, that there is no adequate reason why the diocesan clergy, any more than their bishop, should be bound by this vow. For their chief obligation is the care of souls, and in the circumstances in which their lives are commonly passed, a vow of poverty would be rather a hindrance than an assistance. 'When I sent you without purse, scrip and shoes, did you want anything? But they said: Nothing. Then said he unto them: But now he that hath a purse let him take it.'[1] It is the love of money, not its possession, that is an obstacle to the attainment of perfection. The priest is bound so to live as to portray, in his life, the teaching of Christ on the blessedness of poverty. The Church requires from the priesthood, for manifold reasons, as perfect a life as it is possible to live in this world, but the vow of poverty is not imposed because it is not a necessary means for growth in sanctity. No one would minimise the heroic nature of this vow, especially in those Orders in which it is strictly and literally observed. A study of the theologians and canonists on the subject reveals the number of difficult issues that surround its observance in modern times, especially when a religious is living outside his monastery or community. The observance of a vow of poverty would be practically impossible for secular clergy engaged in the pastoral office, and attempts made in this direction appear to be so cumbersome, and so riddled with exceptions, that it is unlikely that such a

[1] Luke xxii, 35.

novel practice will ever be a useful means for promoting their priestly sanctity.[1]

In order to understand more clearly a rather thorny subject, we must distinguish between the *virtue* of poverty, the object of which is to eliminate all affection for earthly goods, and the *vow* which is concerned with the external rights of ownership. It is possible to infringe the virtue of poverty while strictly keeping the vow. A religious may at times be living in a wealthy community, in dignified and imposing surroundings, and he lacks nothing of the reasonable necessaries and comforts of life. But for Christ's sake, he suffers the mortification of being unable to control or dispose of any of this wealth ; it does not belong to him but to the community. Unlike the religious, the secular clergy enjoy the power of possessing and disposing of their own goods ; they are not required to surrender their natural right of owning property. But they must practise the virtue of poverty because they have made the Lord the portion of their inheritance, because they are the representatives of Christ who became poor for our sake in order that by his poverty we might become rich,[2] and because they are brought into daily contact with the poor whom we have always with us. Very often, as is the case with the clergy of France at the present day, their condition is approaching penury and destitution. Even in this country, in poor and thinly populated districts, the faithful are unable to keep the priest except in the barest necessities of life. One impartial observer has described the life of a priest in London in terms that are, perhaps, too generous : " The priests live as poor men among the poor. Their food is simple, their clothes are threadbare ; they take few holidays. They live from day to day—if

[1] Cf. Cardinal Mercier, *La Fraternité Sacerdotale*, p. 15.
[2] 2 Cor. viii, 9.

they have a shilling in their pocket no one in want will ask in vain."[1] Even in the rare case of a priest possessing abundant private means, he is forbidden by his priestly profession to display his wealth, even in that degree which, in a lay person, would be quite sinless.

For reasons such as these it appears to many that the priesthood, particularly when joined to the pastoral office, is a state of perfection, in the canonical sense. It is a question that will always be open to controversy. What can be asserted, without any fear of contradiction, is that all the essentials and substance of such a state are undoubtedly present. But, on the whole, I should prefer not to claim for the secular clergy a state of perfection in the strict canonical sense. It is certain that a priest is bound to a greater interior sanctity than a religious, but if we allow ourselves to base this obligation on the existence of a canonical ' state ' of perfection, we are liable to obscure a perfectly clear issue by carrying it on to debatable ground. The priest has an obligation to perfection but he is not bound to use exactly the same means as a religious, although he has the vow of chastity, the solemn obligation of obedience, and generally poverty whether he wants it or not. He is also obliged to use other well-defined means towards his personal sanctification, and his priesthood itself requires, for its proper exercise, a high degree of holiness. Everyone clearly recognises two *states* of perfection: the religious life and the episcopate. To claim a like state for the priesthood would seem, to many, the assumption of a canonical status which belongs with certainty only to bishops.

To others it would seem to imply a certain discontent on the part of the parochial clergy, the desire of sick men for food that is denied them, a longing for the reputation

[1] Charles Booth, *Life and Labour in London*, Vol. VII, p. 243.

and privileges of religious. Anyone who is familiar with the work and ideals of the diocesan clergy knows perfectly well how ridiculous it is to suppose that they have any such longing. Their only desire is to be less unworthy of the priesthood, and to give a loyal and generous assistance to their bishop, in the labour of spreading the faith and sanctifying souls within the diocese to which they belong. 'One thing I have asked the Lord, this will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. That I may see the delight of the Lord and may visit his temple. For he hath hidden me in his tabernacle. . . . He hath exalted me upon a rock. . . . I believe to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living.'[1] By the priestly office the soul is brought into closer contact with divine things, and is bound to a greater sanctity than that resulting from the most sacred vows. As Suarez says, the question whether the parochial clergy are in a canonical state of perfection or not is a discussion about words.[2] A lay religious, with merely temporary vows, is in a state of perfection; a priest bound for life to the service of God is not. Curious verbal anomalies of this kind are bound to arise in any system of jurisprudence. Should the legislative authority so desire, the priesthood could be officially called a state of perfection, for it possesses all the substantial elements of that state. But a declaration of this kind would not increase, in the slightest degree, the priestly obligation to holiness of life. It would merely give a further canonical recognition to the sacred obligations which have existed since the institution of the Priesthood by Christ Our Lord.

[1] Ps. xxvi.
[2] Note C, § 3, p. 230.

§ 2

The other misconception, concerning the sanctity required in the priesthood, is far more widely spread than this rather technical and canonical aspect of their ' state.' It arises from the term ' secular,' which has been in use for many centuries in order to distinguish the great body of the diocesan clergy, immediately subject to a bishop, from those priests who are members of a religious Order. ' Secular ' is a literal translation of ' saecularis,' a word of many significations, which in the present context carries the meaning of ' living in the world.' Unfortunately, in current usage, the word is usually applied to institutions which are devoid of religion, or which, at least, are distinct from the Church and its influence ; thus, we speak of the ' secular press ' or the ' secular arm.' As a consequence, the term ' secular clergy ' often suggests to the uneducated, in a vague and undetermined manner, the idea of a priesthood which is somewhat worldly, not wholly and completely devoted to the service of God, tainted with the love of earthly things.

No doubt there are very few people who would understand the term in so gross and material a sense, but I think very many are imbued with ideas which are only a step removed from this. They regard the matter somewhat in this light. A young man with a vocation to the priesthood has two courses open to him. He may, on the one hand, make a full and complete sacrifice of his life to God by joining a religious Order, with the intention of proceeding to the priesthood : in addition to his priestly obligations, he will also be bound by the vows and rule of the Order, and its spirit and ideals will guide and safeguard his priestly life. On the other hand, it is possible for him to attain to the priesthood without fettering his liberty in this way, by becoming *merely* a secular priest ; his life

will then, indeed, be most worthily employed, but it will lack the sacrifice and the generosity implied in becoming a religious ; he may even, like the Curé of Ars, attain to the heights of sanctity, but this will be due to the fact that he has contrived, in spite of many obstacles, to imitate the priestly life as passed in a religious Order. Usually, however, in spite of a laborious priestly life spent in the service of his diocese, he will neither be so spiritually minded as the priest in a religious Order, nor will his labours be equally blessed by God. I think this represents a view of the secular priest's vocation which is far from uncommon, and which is occasionally expressed by some writers, apparently in their anxiety to demonstrate the excellence of religious Orders.[1] Now this view is not only erroneous and unjust ; it is one which, if left uncorrected, can only serve to dishonour the priesthood, which is normally functioning in the Church through the secular clergy, by presenting to candidates in the Seminaries an unworthy idea of the priestly life.

Is it necessary to say that the secular priesthood belongs to the world only in the sublime sense that Christ himself determined : ' I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from evil. . . . As thou hast sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.'[2] On the threshold of the sanctuary, years before the attainment of the priesthood, the Church prays our Lord Jesus Christ to send the Holy Spirit upon the newly tonsured clerics ' to defend their hearts from the hindrances of the world and the love of secular things. . . .' ' Cleanse these thy servants from all the servitude of the secular habit, that while they lay aside the reproach of a worldly dress they

[1] Cf. Note D.
[2] John xvii, 15, 17.

may enjoy thy favour for ever.'[1] The very notion of priesthood carries with it the idea of mediating between God and man, of mixing freely with men in order to attract and lead them to God. It is sprinkled over the earth, like grains of salt, to preserve its life. It is in the world, like a light, to illuminate the minds of men with the teaching of God.[2] This mingling with the world, which is supremely the office of a secular priest, may be dangerous for individuals who have not sufficient force of character to sustain untouched the sacerdotal dignity and office. 'A boy or a man without character,' writes His Eminence Cardinal Bourne, 'will hardly make a good secular priest. Such a one may make an excellent religious, if he has a vocation, for he will be supported and held up by his superiors, his rule and his brethren. But to place him in the world by himself as a secular priest, with no one to lean upon, and everyone leaning upon him, would be to expose him to great danger, and he would be of no profit to the diocese. . . . It is not safe to take our candidates except from those who have character naturally, or who show signs of being able to develop it.'[3]

It can be admitted that the danger of the salt losing its savour, of which Christ spoke,[4] is more remote when one is living under the safeguards of a religious rule. But it is equally beyond dispute that the ordinary pastoral office of the priesthood, in carrying out the commission of Christ in the world, belongs primarily to the secular clergy exercising their priestly office immediately under episcopal control. The indispensable work undertaken by religious Orders in the life of the Church is that of 'auxiliary forces for carrying on extra-parochial activities,

[1] Rite of Conferring the Tonsure.
[2] Cf. Ullathorne, *Ecclesiastical Discourses*, pp. 16 and 17.
[3] Hooley, *A Seminary in the Making*, p. 81.
[4] Matt. v, 13.

supplementary to the ordinary work of the secular clergy.'[1] Even when the circumstances of the development of a country require religious to undertake the ordinary work of serving parishes, it is still true to say that this kind of work, indispensable though it may be, is yet auxiliary to that of the diocesan clergy. For, as we have seen, a man becomes a religious primarily in order to attain with greater security his own personal sanctification, in accordance with the purpose and rule of the Order he joins.

Now, for one who has a vocation to the secular priesthood, and is ordained on a title of service of the diocese, his primary object must be to undertake any work whatsoever that the bishop requires him to do. He may make proper representations and any legitimate preference he may express for a particular employment will be considered, wherever practical and possible. But there is one plea which he can never, under any circumstances, put forward. He can never say that the dreary work in a country village, among a handful of Catholics, is not the purpose for which he was ordained. He can never plead that the enormous pressure of work in the East End of London is interfering with his own religious life, or preventing his progress in prayer. Still less can he pretend that an office entrusted to him by the bishop is inconsistent with his rule of life. For the purpose for which he was ordained is to labour for the salvation of souls, within the limits of a diocese, wherever the bishop may see fit to place him ; his own personal religious life and progress in sanctity is secured by his priestly activity on behalf of men, which is the means of his own sanctification and the measure and test of his own love of God ; he adopts some rule of life suited to his needs, but it is an elastic one which must yield to the demands of his

[1] Abbot Butler, *Catholic Emancipation*, Ch. IX, p. 198.

priestly office, and which is changed as often as the claims of priestly duty demand it.

A diocesan bishop, especially in countries where the ancient faith is slowly regaining ground, has numberless projects for the development of his diocese. Provided he has an adequate supply of suitable secular clergy under his immediate control, he can use them for carrying out his wishes and, if necessary, invoke the solemn promise of obedience made to him at their ordination. But his position with regard to the regular Orders is rather different. He may invite one of them to start a much-needed mission in a country district and the answer may be that this particular work is not the purpose for which that Order exists. He may request another to take charge of a thickly populated district, and may be told that, in such circumstances, the exercises of the religious life would be impossible. No matter what he may request a religious superior to undertake, the answer that such work is inconsistent with the rule is final. Episcopal authority over the regular Orders, once they have undertaken parochial activities on behalf of lay people, is very considerable and far-reaching. But, unlike his authority over the secular clergy of the diocese, the bishop cannot compel their obedience in order to direct their activities into this or that channel. Dearth of subjects, unsuitability of the work, the rule of their constitutions, absolutely entitle a religious superior to decide that a given type of work cannot be undertaken.

That this should be so is right and just and proper. According to their capabilities they have given in the past, and continue to give, a generous and willing assistance to the bishops in the pastoral office. But it is an assistance which must necessarily be of an auxiliary nature and supplementary to the work of the diocesan clergy, whose life has no other purpose

except the pastoral office ; who owe no obedience to any superior except the bishop, on whom by divine institution the care of souls primarily rests ; and who have learnt, and well understand, that their own personal sanctification and salvation consists in a willing and obedient fulfilment of whatever task he lays upon them.

This is the sublime vocation of the secular priest. If a divine vocation to the priesthood, under the ruling providence of God, means anything at all, it means that God has designed a man to be this or that particular priest, not merely a member of the priesthood in general. His vocation, under the secret influence of divine grace, may be towards the particular kind of priestly life exercised among Benedictines or Dominicans or Jesuits. A person who exercised his influence to deflect a postulant from this holy purpose would be doing wrong. To every subject, with a vocation towards the priesthood in a religious Order, we say with S. Jerome : ' Go and live in a monastery that you may be worthy of becoming a cleric.'[1] But others may feel no such attraction. They may desire the priesthood, as it is exercised in the parochial care of souls by men known as ' secular ' priests, in order to do that particular kind of work for God which can be done fully and completely by no religious Order whatever. This is their divine vocation. It differs from a vocation towards the religious life but it is no less sublime. The sacrifices it requires are not those required in religion, but they demand an equal generosity and constancy of purpose. The qualities essential in a secular priest differ from those expected by the spirit and ideal of various religious Orders, but they are no less well defined. The cause of Christ and the spread of the Church is served in rather different ways by the ' secular ' and the ' regular,' for the mystical body

[1] *Supra*, p. 176.

of Christ is composed of many different members and different offices. But the extent to which the glory of God is served by them both depends solely on the way in which each observes to perfection the duties of his state.

§ 3

It has been necessary to explain these simple truths, in order to meet adequately a certain outlook which is erroneous and a dishonour to the priesthood. It is sometimes represented that the secular clergy are good, well-meaning poor fellows, but owing to the imperfection of their state they do less for the Church than religious Orders; that a vocation to the priesthood in a regular Order implies a greater obligation to personal sanctity than that required in the diocesan clergy; that, in primitive times, all priests were members of religious Orders, but, gradually, loving this world, they declined this happy state and 'secularised' themselves; that the ideal much to be desired is for them all to return again to the 'state of perfection.'[1]

Is, then, the priesthood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ of so little avail, that its sacred functions need to be exercised in a human institution or be deprived of their fruit? Are we to say that the ecclesiastical hierarchy of bishops, priests and deacons, the normal ministry of the word and the sacraments, preserved for two thousand years in the Church, is of so little consequence that, no matter how excellent these ministers may be, their office compares unfavourably with that of religious? Did the one hundred and thirty-six secular priests, who shed their blood in this country during the reign of Elizabeth, do less good than the 'seven Jesuits, one Benedictine and

[1] Cf. Note D.

one Franciscan ' who died for the Faith ?[1] Were their lives less devoted to the cause of the ancient religion than those of their brethren, who lived peaceably in the monasteries abroad ?

Some would be prepared to defend the thesis that in fact, whatever may be their respective obligations in theory, the diocesan clergy have done in the past, and are doing now, a more lasting and valuable work for the Church than their regular brethren. One has only to read the famous letter of Cardinal Wiseman to Fr. Faber[2] to understand how lamentably he was disappointed in nearly all the regular Orders he helped to establish within his diocese. ' Now look at the position in which I am. Having believed, having preached, having assured bishops and clergy, that in no great city could the salvation of multitudes be carried out by the limited parochial clergy, but that religious communities alone can, and will, undertake the huge work of converting and preserving the corrupted masses, I have acted on this conviction, I have introduced or greatly encouraged the establishment of *five* religious congregations in my diocese ; and I am just (for the great work) where I first began ! None of them *can* (for it cannot be want of will) undertake it. It comes within the purpose of none of them to try. Souls are perishing around them, but they are prevented by the rules, given by saints, from helping to save them—at least in any but a particular and definite way.' Some would maintain that a collective vote of the episcopate would be in favour of the secular clergy, as offering a greater and more lasting assistance to the bishops in their pastoral office.

The fact that the priesthood, as such, is probably not a state of perfection, in the strict canonical sense, and the fact

[1] Knox, *Douay Diaries*, p. lxiv.
[2] Ward, *Life of Cardinal Wiseman*, II, Ch. XXII.

that the diocesan clergy are known as ' secular,' have been largely responsible for the erroneous view that the religious vocation entails a greater perfection than that which is required from a secular priest. Unless we are prepared to defend the proposition that the priesthood was originally, in Christ's institution, a religious Order with vows, and that it has since, everywhere, departed from Christ's intention, there exists no reason for regarding the priesthood in the religious state as in any way superior to the priesthood of the diocesan clergy. The two vocations are different but their obligation to sanctity is equal, since they are both bound by the sacred obligations of the priestly state.

If any priest attains to an eminent degree of sanctity owing to the exercise of his priestly office, in the salvation of souls and in the example of his life, we regard him as a perfect priest. He has attained to the height of the priestly ideal. It would add little to his praise to say that he observed the monastic rule to perfection, or to say that he was a perfect example of a parish priest : these are the means by which priestly sanctity is attained, and they differ because the two vocations are different. If a young man earnestly desires the priesthood, he gladly and willingly takes the vow of chastity required by the Church. Were he also required to take other vows in a religious Order, he would feel no particular reluctance in so doing ; but the Church does not require him to do so unless he is attracted to that manner of life. He is free to use the liberty of the sons of God in choosing the means of sanctifying his own priestly life.

A religious uses certain means which are not those used by the secular priest, and the secular priest uses certain means which are not those of the religious. A shoemaker is forgiven if he holds the view that there is nothing so good as leather. Every religious is

justly proud of his particular Institute and believes there is nothing in the Church quite as good. The secular priest is equally proud of his state, and believes that nothing contributes so well to the best interests of the Church as a sturdy diocesan clergy, loyally co-operating in the pastoral office of the episcopate. Nor would he change his canonical title 'secular priest.' The words 'monk,' 'friar,' 'Jesuit,' are often regarded with contempt by the prejudiced and the ignorant. A Jesuit has very frequently to explain that his name is not a synonym for deceit and cunning. A monk or a friar resents his habit being associated with luxury and high living. It is equally necessary, very often, to explain that the priesthood is not called 'secular' because it is devoted to the things of this world, or because its obligations are any less spiritual than those of religious. A protest may be all the more urgent, when so grievous an error is perpetuated by people whom one would not expect to be ignorant of the perfection required in the sacerdotal state.

Cardinal Manning's aversion to the word 'secular' is well known, but his attempt to have it changed met with no success; Cardinal Mercier used all his influence to encourage the phrase 'clergé diocesaine';[1] in America the word 'pastoral' is very widely used, and accurately expresses the office of the great body of the priesthood who are not members of religious Orders. But the word 'secular' has been used for centuries and, as far as one can judge, there is no desire among the clergy to be called anything else. For anyone who understands the secular vocation, and who knows the inspiring history of the secular clergy in these islands, it is a name which is as full of sacred memories as that of any religious Order. The desire of the secular clergy is

[1] *La Vie Intérieure*, I, p. 189.

not to change their name, but to be worthy of bearing a title used by so many saintly and Apostolic men in the past.

It is sometimes assumed that, since the lists of recognised Saints contain very few secular clergy, their manner and state of life cannot be calculated to produce anything but an average mediocrity. One could easily deny the truth of this very common assumption. There are many great bishops like S. Francis de Sales and S. Charles Borromeo ; there are simple priests like the Curé of Ars and S. John Baptist de Rossi ; there are the inspiring records of the English martyrs who were largely secular priests. Even granting the truth of the assumption, one must remember that the number of canonised saints is not a necessary indication of the level of sanctity, even in religious Orders. Carthusians, who are on the summit of austerity, have very few, and S. Bruno himself was not canonised till centuries after his death ; they do not want the disturbance attendant on canonisations. Moreover, the promotion of a Cause is long and expensive ; secular clergy are much less the property of their brethren than the members of a religious Order, and there is no one particularly interested. Full details are known and preserved concerning the religious who suffered during the Elizabethan persecutions, but very little is known of many of the seculars except their name and place of martyrdom. If a secular priest of unusual sanctity dies, it is hard to imagine his bishop collecting funds for the expenses of a process. He is usually appealing in various directions for more necessary and vital purposes. He attends the funeral and recalls the heroic virtue of the departed, as Bishop Ullathorne did on many occasions,[1] but his immediate and chief concern is to find someone to take the place of the

[1] E.g. *Letters*, pp. 160, 179.

deceased. But of uncanonised Saints there must be numbers, whose life we fools esteemed madness and their end without honour. The cult of S. Joseph is comparatively recent in the Church.

At the present time, when priests are scarce in many dioceses, and some of the bishops have the greatest difficulty in filling the depleted ranks of the clergy, it is overwhelmingly important that the best type of candidate for the priesthood should not be turned from the secular clergy, with mistaken ideas. No one would suggest the folly and wrong of deflecting religious postulants from their holy purpose ; apart from other reasons, a man with a religious vocation would not usually be happy as a secular priest. There may even exist many and weighty grounds justifying the passing of a secular priest into a regular Order : he may have clear indications of a vocation to the contemplative life ; his character may demand the safeguards of a rule ; he may be unhappy in the lonely life of a mission and feel the need of being supported by a religious community ; the many cares and small details which accompany the pastoral office may be altogether unattractive to him. But other reasons may appear to justify such a step which will be found, on examination, to be illusory. Most human actions are done from mixed motives, and, before a priest surrenders the responsibility of an office solemnly entrusted to him by his bishop, he must first be persuaded in conscience that he is not being deceived by unworthy motives. The one reason that does not bear examination is the erroneous notion that religious are bound to perfection, whereas a priest is not.

If this doctrine is more perfectly appreciated one may be entitled to hope that candidates for the priesthood, from the first stirrings of the grace of vocation, will approach the pastoral office of the secular clergy under no misapprehension concerning its lofty obligations. We

have made a simple plea, on behalf of the secular clergy, that the sacred obligations arising from the priesthood and the pastoral office should not be minimised, and that their obscure, self-sacrificing lives may be allowed to attract earnest and enthusiastic men to the cause of Christ. 'It is quite odd,' wrote Mgr. Benson, in a characteristic vein, 'how laymen entreat me to go into religion. They say that secular priests in England are quite hopeless and that every respectable person nowadays goes into religion, especially the Benedictines.'[1] A desire for respectability is hardly an adequate motive for entering religion, and is quite foreign to the intentions of every founder of a religious Order. It appeared, doubtless, to many that the Apostles themselves were not quite respectable persons.

In Note D there will be found a few extracts which justify the rather vehement assertions of this chapter. They are quotations which fairly represent the vague impressions of many who may have never committed them to writing. My purpose, in calling attention to this matter, is not to score little points of argument, still less to reduce in the slightest degree the admiration and affection due to the regular Orders, from whom the secular clergy draw such constant help and encouragement. I have only wished to make it clear to the readers for whom this book is chiefly intended that they must not approach the secular priesthood with the mistaken impression that a lower ideal of sanctity and conduct is required from them, on the score that they are not going to take vows in religion. On the contrary, they must regard the priesthood in the secular clergy as a state of life requiring, for the proper exercise of its functions, the highest degree of virtue and self-sacrifice. If this is not attained, in a proper measure, it is due very

[1] Martindale, *Life*, I, p. 330.

largely to the propagation of views similar to those in Note D.

The secular clergy of these islands have a history and a tradition of which any country, or any religious Order, might be justifiably proud. As one well-known and much-loved Benedictine has said, in writing of the English Martyrs : ' There was first a great company of the secular priesthood, which in all ages has formed, so to speak, the backbone of Christ's Church.'[1] We are entitled to hope that, with a proper understanding of the priestly life and its sacred ties, this fair tradition may continue to produce a native diocesan clergy, devoted to their office, and sanctifying their own souls in priestly mediation between God and man.

[1] Dom Bede Camm, *The Good Fruit of Tyburn Tree*, p. 12.

CHAPTER X

THE RITE OF CONFERRING THE PRIESTHOOD

Having ordained the Deacons, the Bishop proceeds to his throne or faldstool on the Epistle side of the Altar, and the Tract is sung down to the last verse, exclusive, or if it be within the Octave of Pentecost, the Tract and Sequence down to the last verse, exclusive. Meanwhile, two Chaplains come to the Bishop with candle and book, who reads from it the Tract and Sequence, down to the last verse, exclusive. Then the Bishop, with his mitre on, returns to the front of the Altar, where he sits upon his faldstool.

Then the Archdeacon summons those who are to be ordained, saying aloud :

Accedant qui ordinandi sunt ad ordinem Presbyteratus.

Let those who are to be ordained to the Order of the Priesthood come forward.

Presently their names are read out severally by the Notary, no mention being made of their title. Then, vested as Deacons in amice, alb, girdle, stole and maniple, carrying folded chasubles on their left arms, and holding candles in their hands, and white napkins for tying and washing their hands, they come before the Bishop arranged in a semi-circle.

Then the Archdeacon presents to the Bishop those to be ordained, saying :

Reverendissime Pater, postulat sancta mater Ecclesia Catholica, ut hos præsentes Diaconos ad onus Presbyterii ordinetis.

Right Reverend Father, holy Mother the Catholic Church prayeth that you would ordain the Deacons here present to the charge of the Priesthood.

The Bishop inquires, saying :

Scis illos esse dignos ?

Dost thou know them to be worthy ?

The Archdeacon answers :

Quantum humana fragilitas nosse sinit, et scio, et testificor ipsos dignos esse ad hujus onus officii.

So far as human frailty alloweth me to judge, I both know and bear witness that they be worthy for the charge of this office.

The Bishop says :

Deo gratias.

Thanks be to God.

And he charges the clergy and people, saying :

Quoniam, fratres charissimi, rectori navis, et navigio deferendis eadem est vel securitatis ratio, vel communis timoris, par eorum debet esse sententia, quorum causa communis existit. Neque enim fuit frustra a Patribus institutum, ut de electione illorum, qui ad regimen altaris adhibendi sunt, consulatur etiam populus : quia de vita et conversatione præsentandi, quod nonnumquam ignoratur a pluribus, scitur a paucis ; et necesse est, ut facilius ei quis obedientiam exhibeat ordinato, cui assensum præbuerit ordinando. Horum siquidem Diaconorum in Presbyteros, auxiliante Domino, ordinandorum

Whereas, dearly beloved brethren, the master of a ship and they who sail in her have common motives for security or fear, they whose interest is in common should be of one mind. Nor was it in vain that our fathers established that the people, too, should be consulted touching the choice of those who are to be employed in the service of the altar, for concerning the life and behaviour of one to be presented, that is sometimes unknown to many which is known to a few ; and, besides, all must needs yield a more willing obedience to one ordained if they gave their consent to his ordination. Now the behaviour of these Deacons, who by God's help are about to be ordained Priests, is methinks proven and well-pleasing to God,

conversatio (quantum mihi videtur) probata, et Deo placita existit, et digna (ut arbitror) Ecclesiastici honoris augmento. Sed ne unum fortasse, vel paucos, aut decipiat assensio, vel fallat affectio, sententia est expetenda multorum. Itaque quid de eorum actibus aut moribus noveritis, quid de merito sentiatis, libera voce pandatis; et his testimonium Sacerdotii magis pro merito, quam affectione aliqua, tribuatis. Si quis igitur habet aliquid contra illos, pro Deo, et propter Deum, cum fiducia exeat, et dicat; verumtamen memor sit conditionis suæ.

and worthy, as I judge, of greater ecclesiastical dignity. But lest perhaps good opinion should deceive or affection lead astray one person or a few, the opinion of many should be sought. Wherefore freely utter what you know of their deeds or morals, and what you think of their desert, and testify to their fitness for the priesthood according to their desert rather than out of any feeling of affection for them. If, therefore, anyone have anything to say against them, for God and for God's sake let them come forward and say it; howbeit let him be mindful of his own estate.

After a pause, the Bishop addresses those who are to be ordained, and admonishes them, saying:

Consecrandi, filii dilectissimi, in Presbyteratus officium, illud digne suscipere, ac susceptum laudabiliter exequi studeatis. Sacerdotem etenim oportet offerre, benedicere, præesse, prædicare, et baptizare. Cum magno quippe timore ad tantum

Dearly beloved sons, who are to be consecrated to the office of Priesthood, we exhort you to see that you both worthily receive it, and praiseworthily fulfil it when you have received it. For the Priest shall offer sacrifice, bless, govern, preach and baptise. With great dread,

gradum ascendendum est, ac providendum ut cœlestis sapientia, probi mores, et diuturnæ justitiæ observatio ad id electos commendent. Unde Dominus præcipiens Moysi, ut septuaginta viros de universo Israel in adjutorium suum eligeret, quibus Spiritus sancti dona divideret, suggessit: Quos tu nosti, quod senes populi sunt. Vos siquidem in septuaginta viris, et senibus signati estis: si per Spiritum septiformem, Decalogum legis custodientes, probi, et maturi in scientia similiter et opere eritis. Sub eodem quoque mysterio, et eadem figura in novo Testamento Dominus septuaginta duos elegit, ac binos ante se in prædicationem misit; ut doceret verbo simul, et facto, ministros Ecclesiæ suæ, fide et opere debere esse perfectos; seu geminæ dilectionis, Dei scilicet et proximi, virtute fundatos. Tales itaque esse studeatis, ut in adjuto-

then, should so high a dignity be approached, and care must be taken that those who are chosen thereto should be recommended by divine wisdom, good morals and long observance of righteousness. Wherefore, when the Lord commanded Moses to choose seventy men from all Israel to help him, and to share with them the gifts of the Holy Spirit, he added: Those whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people. And you, indeed, are signified in the seventy men and elders, if by the sevenfold Spirit you will keep the ten commandments of the Law and be blameless and ripe in knowledge and in deed. Under the same mystery and the same figure the Lord in the New Testament chose seventy-two men, and sent them before him, two and two, to preach; that he might teach both by word and deed that the ministers of his Church should be perfect in faith and works, grounded, that is, in the virtue of twofold love for God and their neighbour. Strive, therefore, to be worthy to be chosen by God's grace as

rium Moysi, et duodecim Apostolorum, Episcoporum videlicet Catholicorum, qui per Moysen et Apostolos figurantur, digne, per gratiam Dei, eligi valeatis. Hac certe mira varietate Ecclesia sancta circumdatur, ornatur et regitur: cum alii in ea Pontifices, alii minoris ordinis Sacerdotes, Diaconi, et Subdiaconi, diversorum ordinum viri consecrantur; et ex multis, et alternæ dignitatis membris unum Corpus Christi efficitur. Itaque, filii dilectissimi, quos ad nostrum adjutorium fratrum nostrorum arbitrium consecrandos elegit, servate in moribus vestris, castæ et sanctæ vitæ integritatem. Agnoscite quod agitis; imitamini quod tractatis; quatenus mortis Dominicæ mysteriū celebrantes, mortificare membra vestra a vitiis, et concupiscentiis omnibus procuretis. Sit doctrina vestra spiritualis medicina populo Dei. Sit odor vitæ vestræ de-

helpers of Moses and the twelve Apostles, that is of the Catholic Bishops, who are signified by Moses and the Apostles. By such wonderful variety is holy Church encompassed, adorned and governed, wherein men of different degrees are consecrated, some as Bishops, & some as Priests, Deacons and Subdeacons of lesser degree; so that out of many members of different orders there is made one Body of Christ. Wherefore, dearly beloved sons, whom our brethren's judgement hath chosen to be consecrated for our helpers, keep in your conduct a blameless, chaste and holy life. Know well what you are doing. Conform your lives to your ministry; and as you celebrate the mystery of the Lord's death, take heed that you mortify your members from all vices and lusts. Let your teaching be spiritual medicine for God's people; let the sweet savour of your life be a delight to Christ's Church, that by your preaching and example you may build up the house and household of God; so that neither

lectamentum Ecclesiæ Christi; ut prædicatione, atque exemplo ædificetis domum, id est, familiam Dei, quatenus nec nos de vestra provectione, nec vos de tanti officii susceptione damnari a Domino, sed remunerari potius mereamur. Quod ipse nobis concedat per gratiam suam. ℟. Amen.

we for promoting you to so high an office, nor you for receiving it, may deserve to be condemned of the Lord, but rather rewarded. May he grant us this by his grace. ℟. Amen.

Here, if no Subdeacons or Deacons have been ordained, follow the Litanies as in the Ordination of Subdeacons. Then all rise, and those who are to be ordained kneel two by two in turn before the Bishop, who, standing before the faldstool with his mitre on, silently lays both hands together upon the head of every one who is to be ordained. The same is done after him by all the Priests who are present, of whom three or more should, if possible, be vested in chasubles, or at least in stoles.

Then the Bishop and Priests hold their right hands stretched over them. And the Bishop, standing with his mitre on, says :

Oremus, fratres charissimi, Deum Patrem omnipotentem, ut super hos famulos suos, quos ad Presbyterii munus elegit, cœlestia dona multiplicet ; et quod ejus dignatione suscipiunt, ipsius consequantur auxilio. Per Christũ Dominum nostrum. ℟. Amen.

Dearly beloved brethren, let us pray God the Father Almighty that he would multiply his heavenly gifts upon these his servants, whom he has chosen for the charge of the Priesthood ; and that they may carry on by his help what they receive by his mercy. Through Christ our Lord. ℟. Amen.

The Bishop, having taken off his mitre, turns to the Altar, and says :

Oremus. Let us pray.

And the Ministers :

Flectamus genua. Let us kneel down.

℟. Levate. ℟. Arise.

Then turning towards those who are to be ordained, he says :

Exaudi nos, quæsumus Dñe Deus noster, et super hos famulos tuos benedictionem sancti Spiritus, et gratiæ Sacerdotalis infunde virtutem ; ut quos tuæ pietatis aspectibus offerimus consecrandos, perpetua muneris tui largitate prosequaris. Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christũ Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit, et regnat in unitate ejusdem Spiritus sancti Deus.

Hearken to us, we beseech thee, Lord our God, & pour forth upon these thy servants the blessing of thy Holy Spirit and the virtue of priestly grace, that thou mayest ever bountifully bestow thy gifts on those whom we present before the face of thy loving-kindness for consecration. Through Jesus Christ thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the same Holy Spirit, God.

Then with his hands stretched out in front of his breast, he says :

Per omnia sæcula sæculorum.

℟. Amen.

℣. Dominus vobiscum.

℟. Et cum spiritu tuo.

℣. Sursum corda.

℟. Habemus ad Dominum.

℣. Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro.

℟. Dignum et justum est.

World without end.

℟. Amen.

℣. The Lord be with you.

℟. And with thy spirit.

℣. Lift up your hearts.

℟. We have lifted them up to the Lord.

℣. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

℟. It is meet and just.

Vere dignum et justum est, æquum et salutare, nos tibi sem-

It is truly meet and right, just and healthy unto salvation, that we should always

per, et ubique gratias agere, Domine sancte, Pater omnipotens, æterne Deus, honorum auctor, et distributor omnium dignitatum ; per quem proficiunt universa, per quem cuncta firmantur, amplificatis semper in melius naturæ rationalis incrementis, per ordinem congrua ratione dispositum. Unde et Sacerdotales gradus, atque officia Levitarum, Sacramentis mysticis instituta creverunt : ut cum Pontifices summos regendis populis præfecisses, ad eorum societatis et operis adjumentum, sequentis ordinis viros, et secundæ dignitatis eligeres. Sic in eremo per septuaginta virorum prudentium mentes Moysi spiritum propagasti, quibus ille, adjutoribus usus, in populo innumeras multitudines facile gubernavit. Sic et in Eleazarum et Ithamarum filios Aaron paternæ plenitudinis abundantiam transfudisti, ut ad hostias salutares, et fre-

and everywhere give thanks to thee, O Holy Lord, Father Almighty, everlasting God, source of honours and dispenser of every dignity ; by whom all things grow up and become strong, and the development of our rational nature ever advances to better things, according to order fittingly arranged. Wherefore the priestly grades and the functions of the Levites were instituted and increased with mystical significance ; so that even after thou didst set up High Priests as rulers over thy people, thou didst choose for their helpers and assistants men of lower degree and lesser rank. So too in the wilderness thou didst plant the spirit of Moses in the minds of seventy wise men, by whose help he easily governed countless multitudes of the people. So too thou didst pour forth upon Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron, the fulness of their father's grace, that there might be sufficient priests for the ministry of the saving victims, and rites of more frequent service. With the same foresight, O Lord, thou didst

quentioris officii Sacramenta ministerium sufficeret Sacerdotum. Hac providentia, Dñe, Apostolis Filii tui Doctores fidei comites addidisti, quibus illi orbem totum secundis prædicationibus impleverunt. Quapropter infirmitati quoque nostræ, Dñe, quæsumus, hæc adjumenta largire, qui quanto fragiliores sumus, tanto his pluribus indigemus. Da, quæsumus, omnipotens Pater, in hos famulos tuos Presbyterii dignitatem; innova in visceribus eorum Spiritum sanctitatis; ut acceptum a te, Deus, secundi meriti munus obtineant, censuramque morum exemplo suæ conversationis insinuent. Sint providi cooperatores ordinis nostri; eluceat in eis totius forma justitiæ, ut bonam rationem dispensationis sibi creditæ reddituri, æternæ beatitudinis præmia consequantur.

add to the Apostles of Thy Son fellow-teachers of the faith, by means of whom they filled the whole world with their preaching. Wherefore do thou, O Lord, we beseech thee, grant this help unto our weakness, who have the more need than they since we are so much weaker than they. Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty Father, the dignity of the Priesthood to these thy servants, and renew within them the Spirit of holiness; that they may hold from thee, O God, the second rank in thy service, and by the example of their conversation may afford a pattern of holy living. May they be careful helpers of our Order, and may every kind of righteousness shine forth within them, that they may give a good account of the stewardship committed to them, and enjoy the reward of everlasting happiness.

What follows is read in a low voice, but so as to be heard by the bystanders :

Per eumdem Dñm nostrum Jesum Christum Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit, et regnat in unitate Spiritus sancti Deus, per omnia sæcula sæculorum. R/. Amen.

Through the same our Lord Jesus Christ thy Son, who liveth & reigneth with thee in the unity of the same Holy Spirit, God, world without end. R/. Amen.

The Bishop sits down, puts on his mitre, and taking the stole, which hangs behind the left shoulder of each, turns it back and putting it over the right shoulder, arranges it crosswise on the breast, saying to each :

Accipe jugum Dñi ; jugum enim ejus suave est et onus ejus leve.

Receive the yoke of the Lord, for his yoke is sweet and His burden light.

He then puts the Chasuble on the shoulders of every one in turn, so that each wears it folded over the shoulders, but hanging down in front, saying to each :

Accipe vestem Sacerdotalem, per quam charitas intelligitur; potens est enim Deus, ut augeat tibi charitatem, et opus perfectum. R/. Deo gratias.

Receive the priestly vestment, by which is signified charity ; for God is able to increase within thee charity and a perfect work. R/. Thanks be to God.

The Bishop rises, with his mitre off, and all kneel down, while he says :

Deus sanctificationum omnium auctor, cujus vera consecratio plenaque benedictio est, tu, Dñe, super hos famulos tuos, quos ad Presbyterii honorem dedicamus, munus tuæ bene✠dictionis infunde ; ut gravitate actuum, et censura vivendi

O God, the source of all holiness, of whom are true consecration & the fulness of blessing ; pour forth, O Lord, upon these thy servants, whom we now set apart for the dignity of priesthood, the grace of thy bless✠ing that by the seriousness of their actions and the example of

probent se seniores, his instituti disciplinis quas Tito et Timotheo Paulus exposuit ; ut in lege tua die ac nocte meditantes, quod legerint, credant ; quod crediderint, doceant ; quod docuerint, imitentur ; justitiam, constantiam, misericordiam, fortitudinem, cæterasque virtutes in se ostendant; exemplo præbeant; admonitione confirment ; ac purum et immaculatum ministerii sui donum custodiant ; et in obsequium plebis tuæ, panem et vinum in Corpus et Sanguinem Filii tui immaculata benedictione transforment ; et inviolabili charitate in virum perfectum, in mensuram ætatis plenitudinis Christi, in die justi et æterni judicii Dei, conscientia pura, fide vera, Spiritu sancto pleni resurgant. Per eumdem Dominum nostrũ Jesum Christum Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit, et regnat in unitate ejusdem Spiritus sancti Deus, per omnia sæcula sæculorum. R7. Amen.

their lives they may prove themselves elders, grounded in the teaching which Paul taught to Titus and Timothy ; that meditating on thy law by day and by night they may believe what they read, teach what they believe, and follow what they teach ; that they may show forth within them justice, constancy, mercy, fortitude & all other virtues ; set them forth by their example ; confirm others in them by their admonition ; that they may keep clean and undefiled the gift of their ministry, and for the services of thy people by a spotless blessing change bread and wine into the Body and Blood of thy Son ; and that by their unfailing charity they may rise up in the day of the just and eternal judgement of God with a clean conscience, true faith, & filled with the Holy Ghost unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Through the same Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee in the Unity of the same Holy Ghost, God, world without end. R7. Amen.

Then the Bishop, without his mitre, turns to the Altar, and kneeling down begins aloud the following hymn, which is continued by the Choir :

Veni Creator Spiritus,
Mentes tuorum visita,
Imple superna gratia,
Quæ tu creasti, pectora.

Come, Holy Ghost, Creator, come,
From thy bright heavenly throne :
Come, take possession of our souls,
And make them all thine own.

The Bishop rises and performs what is described at the end of the hymn. Meanwhile the Choir continues the hymn, which shall be repeated, with the omission of the first verse, if the number of those to be ordained require.

Qui diceris Paraclitus,
Altissimi donum Dei,
Fons vivus, ignis, charitas,
Et spiritalis unctio.

Thou who art called the Paraclete,
Best gift of God above ;
The living Spring, the living Fire,
Sweet Unction and true Love.

Tu septiformis munere,
Digitus paternæ dexteræ,
Tu rite promissum Patris,
Sermone ditans guttura.

Thou who art sevenfold in thy grace,
Finger of God's right hand :
His Promise, teaching little ones
To speak and understand.

Accende lumen sensibus,
Infunde amorem cordibus,
Infirma nostri corporis
Virtute firmans perpeti.

Oh ! guide our minds with thy blest light,
With love our hearts inflame,
And with thy strength, which ne'er decays,
Confirm our mortal frame.

Hostem repellas longius,
Pacemque dones protinus,
Ductore sic te prævio
Vitemus omne noxium.

Far from us drive our hellish foe,
True peace unto us bring,
And thro' all perils lead us safe
Beneath thy sacred wing.

Per te sciamus da Patrem,
Noscamus atque Filium,
Teque utriusque Spiritum
Credamus omni tempore.

Through thee may we the Father know,
Through thee the eternal Son,
And thee, the Spirit of them both,
Thrice blessed Three in One.

Deo Patri sit gloria,
Et Filio, qui a mortuis
Surrexit, ac Paraclito,
In sæculorum sæcula.
Amen.

All glory to the Father be,
And to his risen Son,
The like to thee, great Paraclete,
While endless ages run. [Amen.

When the first verse has been said, the Bishop rises and sits on the faldstool, wearing his mitre. He takes off his gloves, and puts on his bishop's ring. A gremial or napkin is spread over his lap, and each of the Ordinands in turn kneels before him. The Bishop anoints each one's hands, which are joined together in the pattern of a cross, by drawing with his right thumb, which he has dipped into the oil, two lines—from the thumb of the right hand to the index finger of the left, and from the left thumb to the right index finger—and then anoints the entire palms, saying, while he anoints each one:

Consecrare, et sanctificare digneris, Domine, manus istas per istam unctionem, et nostram bene✠dictionem.

℟. Amen.

Vouchsafe, O Lord, to consecrate & hallow these hands by this anointing and our bless✠ing.

℟. Amen.

The Bishop then draws with his hand the sign of the cross on the hand of him whom he is ordaining, and continues :

Ut quæcumque benedixerint, benedicantur, et quæcumque consecraverint, consecrentur et sanctificentur ; in nomine Dñi nostri Jesu Christi.

That whatsoever they shall bless, may be blessed ; and whatsoever they shall consecrate may be consecrated & hallowed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And each Ordinand answers : Amen.

The Bishop then closes or joins the hands of each in turn, and one of the Bishop's attendants binds them, so consecrated, with a white linen napkin, the right hand over the left. Then each returns to his place and keeps his hands so joined and tied. After the hands of all have been anointed and consecrated, the Bishop wipes his thumb with bread crumb, and then delivers to each in turn a chalice with wine and water, and a paten placed upon it with a Host. They receive it between the index and middle fingers, and touch the bowl of the chalice and the paten at the same time, the Bishop saying to each :

Accipe potestatem offerre sacrificium Deo, Missasque celebrare, tam pro vivis, quam pro defunctis. In nomine Domini. R7. Amen.

Receive power to offer sacrifice to God, and to celebrate Masses, both for the living and the dead. In the name of the Lord. R7. Amen.

When he has come to an end, the Bishop cleanses his hands with crumb of bread and washes them ; the water he has used shall be thrown into the piscina : he then returns mitred to the throne, or faldstool, where he sits down with his mitre on. The Choir then sings the last verse of the Tract, or Sequence, or the Alleluia. Meanwhile, two Chaplains come before the Bishop with book and candle, and he reads the aforesaid last verse of the Tract, or Sequence, or the Alleluia, and says secretly the 'Cleanse my heart,' etc., after which he reads the Gospel. At the same time one of the newly ordained Deacons goes to the Altar holding the Book of Gospels to his breast, and says 'Cleanse my heart,' etc., and sings (or reads) the Gospel. The attendants shall meanwhile place in readiness upon the Altar a sufficient number of Particles for those who have taken Holy Orders, as they all are to receive Communion, and the Mass proceeds as usual. While the Offertory is being sung, or sooner, the newly ordained Priests shall wash their hands with crumb of bread and water, and dry them on the napkins wherewith

they were bound. This water shall be thrown down the piscina. The Bishop, having read the Offertory, puts on his mitre, and taking his seat on the faldstool at the middle of the Altar, receives the offerings of all who have been ordained. They come in pairs before the Bishop and kneeling present to him candles lighted, the Priests first, then the Deacons, and the others according to their grade. Having received the offerings of all, the Bishop washes his hands, rises without his mitre, and, the faldstool being removed, continues the Mass. Those who have taken Priest's Orders shall kneel on the ground behind the Bishop, or on either side, as may be more convenient; each shall have a Missal in readiness. They shall recite 'Receive, O Holy Father,' etc., and the rest of the Mass with the Bishop, who shall take care to say the secret parts slowly, and in a voice loud enough to enable the newly ordained Priests to say everything with him, and especially the words of Consecration, which they shall take care to say simultaneously with the Bishop. The Secret Prayer for the ordained is to be joined to that of the Mass under one conclusion. It is as follows:

Tuis, quæsumus Domine, operare mysteriis, ut hæc tibi munera dignis mentibus offeramus. Per Dñm nostrũ Jesum Christum Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit, et regnat in unitate Spiritus sancti Deus, per omnia sæcula sæculorum.

Do thou, O Lord, we beseech thee, so work by thy mysteries, that we may offer unto thee these gifts with meet intentions. Through Jesus Christ thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end.

℟. Amen. ℟. Amen.

After the prayer for peace, 'O Lord Jesus Christ,' etc., the Bishop kisses the Altar, and gives the kiss of peace to the first of those ordained to each of the three Sacred Orders, who shall come one after another to his right side, and kiss the Altar. He says, 'Pax tecum,' to which is answered, 'Et cum spiritu tuo.' On coming down from the Altar each one will give the kiss of peace to the next in order of those who have taken the same Order as himself, the latter passes it on to the third, and so on to the last. Should the number of the ordained be small, the Bishop might give to each person the kiss of peace.

When the Bishop has consumed the Host and the whole of the Precious Blood, before he takes the Ablutions, the Priests, then the Deacons and Subdeacons, approach the Altar, and kneel down in due order. The Bishop genuflects to the Sacrament,

and withdrawing a little towards the Gospel side, turns to them, while all the Deacons and Subdeacons (not the Priests) say in an undertone the 'Confiteor.'

If the Mass be sung, one of the newly ordained sings the Confession. The Bishop, standing bare-headed, turns to them, saying in an audible voice, unless the Mass be sung :

Misereatur vestri omnipotens Deus, et dimissis peccatis vestris, perducat vos ad vitam æternam.

℟. Amen.

May Almighty God have mercy upon you, forgive you your sins, and bring you to life everlasting.

℟. Amen.

Indulgentiam, absolutionem, et remissionem peccatorum vestrorum, tribuat vobis omnipotens, et misericors Dominus.

℟. Amen.

May the Almighty and merciful Lord give you pardon, absolution and remission of your sins. ℟. Amen.

He makes the sign of the Cross over all of them. The Priests do not say the Confession before Communion, nor is the Absolution given to them, as they celebrate with the Bishop. Wherefore, if only Priest's Orders have been given, the foregoing Confession and Absolution shall be omitted.

The newly ordained then go in pairs to the highest Altar step. The Bishop puts a certain number of consecrated Particles on the paten, which he holds under the chin of each communicant. When giving the Particle, he says :

Corpus Domini nostri Jesu Christi custodiat te in vitam æternam.

The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ keep thee unto life everlasting.

Each answers : Amen.

Before receiving Communion, every one shall kiss the hand of the Bishop which holds the Particle.

One of the Bishop's attendants stands at the Epistle side of the Altar with a chalice other than that which has served at the Mass, containing wine ; he holds in his hands a small napkin, and gives the chalice to each communicant ; they purify themselves, wipe their mouth, and withdraw to their place. When all have received, the Bishop cleanses the paten over his own chalice, washes his fingers over it, takes the Ablution, and, putting on his mitre, washes his hands.

When this is done, the mitre is taken off, and the Bishop, standing at the Epistle side, facing the Altar, intones the following responsory, which the Choir continues. From Septuagesima till Easter the 'Alleluia' is omitted.

Jam non dicam vos servos, sed amicos meos, quia omnia cognovistis, quæ operatus sum in medio vestri, alleluia. * Accipite Spiritum sanctum in vobis Paraclitum. * Ille est, quem Pater mittet vobis, alleluia. ℣. Vos amici mei estis, si feceritis, quæ ego præcipio vobis. Accipite. ℣. Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui sancto. * Ille est quem.

Now will I no longer call you servants, but my friends, since ye know what I have wrought in the midst of you, alleluia. * Receive the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, within you. * He it is whom the Father will send to you, alleluia. ℣. Ye are my friends, if ye will do what I command you. * Receive . . . within you. ℣. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. * He it is. . . .

After intoning this Responsory, the Bishop puts on his mitre and turns to the Priests just ordained, who stand before the Altar and profess their faith, which they are to preach, in these words:

Credo in Deum, Patrem omnipotentem, Creatorem cœli et terræ. Et in Jesum Christum, Filium ejus unicum, Dominum nostrum. Qui conceptus est de Spiritu sancto, natus ex Maria Virgine, passus sub Pontio Pilato, crucifixus, mortuus, et sepultus: descendit ad inferos; tertia die resurrexit a mortuis: ascendit ad cœlos, sedet ad dexteram Dei

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. Who was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into hell, the third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence he

Patris omnipotentis. Inde venturus est judicare vivos, et mortuos. Credo in Spiritum sanctum; sanctam Ecclesiam Catholicam; Sanctorũ communionem; remissionem peccatorum; carnis resurrectionem; vitam æternam. Amen.

shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Then the Bishop, wearing his mitre, sitting on the faldstool before the middle of the Altar, puts both his hands on the head of each as they kneel before him, saying to him:

Accipe Spiritũ sanctum, quorum remiseris peccata, remittuntur eis; et quorum retinueris, retenta sunt.

Receive the Holy Ghost, whose sins thou shalt forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou shalt retain, they are retained.

He then unfolds the chasuble, which each carries folded upon his shoulders, and, putting it on each, says to him:

Stola innocentiæ induat te Dominus.

May the Lord clothe thee with the robe of innocence.

Each Priest now returns to the Bishop, and, kneeling before him, places his own hands, which are joined, between those of the Bishop, who, if he be his Ordinary, says to him:

Promittis mihi, et successoribus meis reverentiam, et obedientiam?

Dost thou promise to me & to my successors reverence and obedience?

He answers:

Promitto.

I do promise.

If the ordaining Bishop is not his Ordinary, while holding his hands as above, he shall say to a Secular Priest:

Promittis Pontifici ordinario tuo, *etc.*

Dost thou promise to the Bishop thine Ordinary, *etc.*

But to a Regular :

Promittis Prælato Ordinario tuo, *etc.*

Dost thou promise to the Prelate thine Ordinary, *etc.*

Promittis Pontifici (*vel* Prælato) Ordinario tuo pro tempore existenti reverentiam, et obedientiam?

Dost thou promise to the Bishop (*or* Prelate), thine Ordinary for the time being, reverence and obedience ?

And he answers :

Promitto.

I do promise.

The Bishop, still holding his hands between his own, kisses him, saying :

Pax Domini sit semper tecum.

The peace of the Lord be ever with you.

And he answers : Amen.

When this is finished and they have returned to their places, the Bishop sitting with his mitre and staff, thus charges them, saying :

Quia res, quam tractaturi estis, satis periculosa est, filii dilectissimi, moneo vos, ut diligenter totius Missæ ordinem, atque Hostiæ consecrationem, ac fractionem, et communionem, ab aliis jam doctis Sacerdotibus discatis priusquam ad celebrandum Missam accedatis.

Dearly beloved sons, as what you have to handle is somewhat liable to mischance, I admonish you to learn diligently from other experienced Priests the Order of Mass and the consecration, breaking and communion of the Host, before you approach to celebrate Mass.

Then rising with mitre and staff, he blesses the Priests, who are still kneeling before him, saying, in an audible voice :

Benedictio Dei omnipotentis, Pa✠tris, et Fi✠lii, et Spiritus ✠ sancti descendat super vos ; ut sitis benedicti in Ordine

The Blessing of God Almighty, Fa✠ther, ✠Son, and Holy ✠ Ghost descend upon you, that you may be blessed in the Priestly Order ; and

Sacerdotali ; et offeratis placabiles Hostias pro peccatis, atque offensionibus populi omnipotenti Deo, cui est honor, et gloria per omnia sæcula sæculorum. ℟. Amen.

offer propitiatory sacrifices for the sins and offences of his people, unto God Almighty, to whom be honour and glory for ever and ever. ℟. Amen.

The mitre is then removed, and the faldstool taken away. The Bishop, turning to the Altar, continues the Mass. The Communion is sung, after which the following Postcommunion is said for the ordained under one conclusion with the Postcommunion of the day :

Quos tuis, Domine, reficis Sacramentis, continuis attolle benignus auxiliis ; ut tuæ redemptionis effectum et mysteriis capiamus, et moribus. Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christũ Filiũ tuum, qui tecum vivit, et regnat in unitate Spiritus sancti Deus, per omnia sæcula sæculorũ. ℟. Amen.

Do thou, O Lord, bountifully sustain with thy continual help those whom thou dost refresh with thy Sacraments ; that we may enjoy the fruit of thy Redemption both in thy mysteries and in our lives. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with thee in the Unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. ℟. Amen.

Then follows either ' Benedicamus Domino ' or ' Ite, missa est,' according to the season ; and the Bishop says the Prayer, ' Placeat tibi sancta,' etc.

The Bishop then takes his mitre and pastoral staff, and gives the ordinary blessing, saying : ' Sit nomen Domini benedictum,' etc.

He then sits down and addresses as follows the newly ordained :

Filii dilectissimi, diligenter considerate Ordinem per vos susceptum, ac onus humeris vestris impositum ; studete sancte et religiose vivere,

Dearly beloved sons, mark well the order you have received and the burden set upon your shoulders. Endeavour to live a holy and religious life and to please

atque omnipotenti Deo placere, ut gratiam suam possitis acquirere ; quam ipse vobis per suam misericordiam concedere dignetur. Singuli ad primam Tonsuram, vel ad quatuor minores Ordines promoti, dicite semel septem Psalmos Pœnitentiales, cum Litaniis, Versiculis, et Orationibus. Ad Subdiaconatum, vel Diaconatum, Nocturnum talis diei. Ad Presbyteratum vero ordinati, post primam vestram Missam, tres alias Missas, videlicet, unam de Spiritu sancto, aliam de beata Maria semper Virgine, tertiam pro fidelibus defunctis dicite, et omnipotentem Deum etiam pro me orate.

God Almighty, that you may obtain his grace, which of his mercy he vouchsafes to grant you. All you who have been raised to the first Tonsure, or to the four Minor Orders, say once the Seven Penitential Psalms, with the Litanies, Versicles & Prayers. You who have been raised to the Subdiaconate or to the Diaconate, say the Nocturn of *such* a day. And you who have been ordained to the Priesthood, after your first Mass say three other Masses, one of the Holy Ghost, one of the Blessed Mary ever a Virgin, and a third for the faithful departed, and also pray to Almighty God for me.

This they devoutly accept, and promise to perform.
The Bishop then, turning to the Altar, says in an undertone:

'Dominus vobiscum.'

Initium sancti Evangelii secundum Joannem. In principio, *etc.*

The beginning of the holy Gospel according to John. In the beginning, *etc.*

He makes the sign of the Cross on the Altar and on himself, and returns to the throne or faldstool, where he unvests. The newly ordained Priests say the same Gospel, and in a fitting place they, with the others who have been ordained, take off their vestments.

NOTE A

VOCATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD

§ 1. In 1909 Canon J. Lahitton, dogmatic professor in the Seminary of Poyanne, published a work entitled *La Vocation Sacerdotale*, in which he showed that the call of God to the Priesthood is the call given by the lawful authority of the Church, not that experienced in the subjective convictions of the candidate. It gave rise to serious controversies in theological schools, as it appeared to many to contradict the accepted doctrine. Pius X appointed a Commission of Cardinals who examined the whole question and gave the following decision on June 20th, 1912, in a letter addressed to the bishop of the diocese in which M. Lahitton was teaching :

Opus præstantis viri, Josephi Canonici Lahitton, cui titulus *La Vocation Sacerdotale*, nullo modo reprobandum esse ; imo qua parte adstruit :

(1) Neminem habere jus ullum ad ordinationem antecedenter ad liberam electionem Episcopi.

(2) Conditionem, quæ ex parte Ordinandi debet attendi, quæque vocatio sacerdotalis appellatur, nequaquam consistere, saltem necessario et de lege ordinaria, in interna quadam adspiratione subjecti seu invitamentis Spiritus Sancti, ad sacerdotium ineundum.

(3) Sed econtra, nihil plus in Ordinando, ut rite vocetur ab Episcopo, requiri quam rectam intentionem simul cum ideonitate in iis gratiæ et naturæ dotibus

reposita, et per eam vitæ probitatem ac doctrinæ sufficientiam comprobata, quæ spem fundatum faciant ut sacerdotii munera recte obire eiusdemque obligationes sancte servare queat : ESSE EGREGIE LAUDANDAM. (*A.A.S.*, 1912, p. 485).

In a letter of June 7th, 1913, the personal felicitations of the Pope were conveyed to the author on the appearance of a new edition of the work. (*A.A.S.*, Vol. V, p. 290).

§ 2. These three statements, which represent the traditional teaching of the Church and endorse the central thesis of M. Lahitton, do not establish that there is no internal movement of God upon the souls of those being called to the priesthood, anterior to the external call of the Bishop. Many, indeed, wrongly understood the Roman decision in this sense. What the decision rejected was the view which regarded the ' interna adspiratio subjecti ' as formally constituting divine vocation. Hence, on the appearance of the New Code, in 1918, there were found certain expressions which clearly supposed the existence of vocation in the young, years before they would be called to Holy Orders externally by the Church. ' Dent operam sacerdotes, præsertim parochi, ut pueros qui indicia præbeant divinæ vocationis, peculiaribus curis a sæculi contagiis arceant, ad pietatem informent, primis litterarum studiis imbuant divinæque in eis vocationis germen foveant.' Canon 1353. Cf. also Canon 1357, § 2. Some have regarded these expressions as an official modification of the Roman decision in 1912. (Cf. *Ami du Clergé*, 1921, pp. 390–394). A more recent work, *La Vocation au Sacerdoce*, by Alphonse Mulders, Bruges 1925, examines more fully this element in vocation which is anterior and preparatory to the choice of the Church. The author approaches the subject with the purpose of demonstrating that the existence of this anterior vocation is the traditional

teaching of the Church, and is in perfect accord with the Roman decision of 1912.

§ 3. In the chapter on Vocation we have described all the various predispositions of the subject, his circumstances in life, the formation of his intention and the fact that he possesses the necessary qualities, as constituting a necessary part of the divine vocation to the priesthood, the ' germen vocationis ' of which the Code speaks. We have conceived it to be more in accordance with the traditional teaching of the Church, and the common persuasion of the faithful, to regard this incipient vocation as the special work of God, calling a soul to the priesthood. The doctrine of the Roman decision of 1912 is vigorously sustained. For, on the one hand, the external call of the Church is essential for ' formal ' decisive vocation, and without it the candidate could not be said to have the right intention; on the other hand, this vocation, anterior to the call of the Church, is represented not as a sensible internal attraction felt by the subject, but as the action of divine grace, shaping and directing a youth towards the priesthood, and assisting him to form a right intention in desiring it. Should anyone desire a more detailed and documented study of the subject, it will be found in *La Vocation au Sacerdoce* by Dr. A. Mulders, whose conclusions have been adopted in the above chapters, by his kind permission. This work should be read in conjunction with Lahitton's *La Vocation Sacerdotale.*

NOTE B

THE PRIESTLY OBLIGATION TO PERSONAL SANCTITY

§ 1. THE patristic doctrine may be conveniently read in such works as: Tronson, *Forma Cleri*, I, cap. 2, De Sanctitate Cleri (Migne Ed., I, col. 1032); De Molina, *Le Prêtre d'après l'Écriture Sainte, les Saints Pères et les docteurs de l'Église*. (Ed. Letouzey, Vol. I, Part ii, De La Sainteté du Sacerdoce).

§ 2. The teaching of the Middle Ages is best studied in S. Thomas Aquinas. He does not regard the priesthood as a state of perfection; the obligation arises not from 'state' but from the 'priesthood.'

(*a*) '. . . . per sacrum ordinem aliquis deputatur ad dignissima mysteria, quibus ipsis Christus servitur in sacramento Altaris; ad quod requiritur maior sanctitas interior, quam requirat etiam religionis status; quia, sicut Dionysius dicit, 6 cap. Eccl. Hier. "monasticus ordo debet sequi sacerdotales ordines, et ad eorum imitationem ad divina ascendere"; unde gravius peccat, cæteris paribus, clericus in sacris ordinibus constitutus, si aliquid contrarium sanctitati agat, quam aliquis religiosus qui non habet ordinem sacrum; quamvis laicus religiosus teneatur ac observantias regulares, ad quas illi qui sunt in sacris ordinibus non tenentur.' (*Summa Theol.*, II–II, 184, art. 8).

(*b*) '. . . . ordines sacri præexigunt sanctitatem: sed status religionis est exercitium quoddam ad sanctitatem

assequendam ; unde pondus ordinum imponendum est parietibus jam per sanctitatem desiccatis : sed pondus religionis desiccat parietes, id est homines, ab humore vitiorum.' (*Ib.* 189, 1, *ad* 3).

(*c*) '. . . . ad idoneam executionem ordinum non sufficit bonitas qualiscunque, sed requiritur bonitas excellens : ut sicut illi qui ordinem suscipiunt, super plebem constituuntur gradu ordinis, ita et superiores sint merito sanctitatis . . .' (*Ib.*, *Suppl.* 35, 1, *ad* 3).

(*d*) '. . . . ad minus hoc requiritur, quod nesciat ordinans aliquid contrarium sanctitati in ordinando esse : sed etiam exigitur amplius, ut secundum mensuram ordinis, vel officii injungendi, diligentior cura apponatur, ut habeatur certitudo de qualitate promovendorum, saltem ex testimonio aliorum ; et hoc est quod Apostolus dicit, 1 Tim. v : Manus cito nemini imposueris.' (*Ib.*, 36, 1, *ad* 3).

(*e*) '. . . . sicut Dionysius dicit : . . . in omni divino non est audendum aliis dux esse, nisi secundum omnem habitum suum factus Dei firmissimus et Deo simillimus.' (*IV Dist.* 24, q. i, art. 3. Ed. Parma, VII, p. 893).

(*f*) '. . . . sacerdos habet duos actus : unum principaliter supra corpus Christi verum ; et alterum secundarium supra corpus Christi mysticum. Secundus autem actus dependet a primo, sed non convertitur ; et ideo aliqui ad sacerdotium promoventur, quibus committitur primus actus tantum, sicut religiosi quibus cura animarum non committitur . . .' (*Ib.*).

(*g*) '. . . . quicunque indignum promovet . . . mortale crimen committit, quasi summo Domino infidelis : et præcipue cum hoc in detrimentum Ecclesiæ vergat et honoris divini, qui per bonos ministros promovetur . . . Deus nunquam ita deserit Ecclesiam suam quin inveniantur idonei ministri sufficienter ad necessitatem plebis, si digni promoverentur, et indigni repellerentur. Et si non possent tot ministri inveniri quot modo sunt ;

melius esset habere paucos ministros bonos quam multos malos, ut dicit beatus Clemens.' (*Ib.*, p. 894).

(*h*) '. . . . jus naturæ est indispensabile. Hoc autem est de jure naturali ut homo sancta sancte pertractet.' (*Ib.*).

For the teaching of other medieval writers, S. Hildegarde, S. Bernard, S. Francis of Assisi, and S. Catherine of Siena, see Pourrat, *Spiritualité Chrétienne*, Vol. II, Ch. III, § 2 ; Ch. II, § 8 ; Ch. VII, § 3.

§ 3. In more recent times, this question had a most fruitful and striking prominence during the seventeenth century in France. The names of de Bérulle, Condren, Olier and others who, with S. Vincent de Paul, did so much to elevate the status of the clergy, will always be remembered with veneration and gratitude. An account of the writers of this school will be found in Pourrat, op. cit., Vol. III, Ch. XIV, but the fullest description is in Bremond, *Histoire Littéraire du Sentiment religieux en France*, Vol. III, p. 157 seq.

§ 4. This subject must always be one of the most pressing cares of the episcopate, at all times. In modern days, the spirit of Cardinal de Bérulle has found expression in the works and activities of many other eminent cardinals and bishops : Cardinal Manning, *The Eternal Priesthood*, Ch. IV ; *The Pastoral Office*, Ch. V ; Cardinal Mercier, *La Vie Intérieure*, Ch. IV ; Cardinal Bourne, *Ecclesiastical Training*, *Synodal Allocution*, October 6th, 1925 ; see also Hooley, *A Seminary in the Making*, an account of the foundation of Wonersh ; Bishop Ward, *The Priestly Vocation ;* Bishop Hedley, *Lex Levitarum*.

It is worth remarking that when a religious is elevated to the episcopate, his care and attention is always drawn to the doctrine outlined in Chapters VIII and IX of this book. He is then, for the first time, brought into immediate and responsible contact with his diocesan clergy. He sees and understands their lives in a manner which he could not do while a simple religious. Cf.

Bishop Hedley, O.S.B., *Retreat for Priests*, p. 100. Bishop Ullathorne, O.S.B., preached the discourse at the IVth Provincial Council of Westminster (cf. p. 160 *supra*). It is contained in his *Ecclesiastical Discourses*, Ch. VI, p. 115. He writes as follows, to a friend : ' I am working up a synodal discourse on the sanctity of the Priesthood. It is remarkable that both S. Thomas and Suarez decide that more sanctity is required in the pastoral clergy than in mere Religious, although the perils are greater and it is rarely attained.' (*Letters*, p. 343.) He was quick in recognising the sanctity of many of his clergy and recorded the fact on several occasions.

This all-important doctrine concerning the most vital of all priestly obligations is slowly finding its rightful place in theological and spiritual writings at the present time. Mgr. Grabmann, the greatest living authority on the writings of S. Thomas and medieval theologians, in *Zeitschrift für Aszese u. Mystik*, 1927, pp. 189–209, develops the thesis of Cardinal Mercier and illustrates the teaching of S. Thomas by citations from his contemporaries. Cf. also Vacant et Mangenot, *Dict. Theol.*, IV, col. 684 ; V, col. 907. Of more consequence than learned discussions, we find modern manuals of theology and of the spiritual life describing priestly sanctity, not in vague terms of something edifying and much to be desired, but as a strict and well-defined obligation assumed with the priesthood. Cf. Tanquerey, *Theol. Moral.*, III, § 1024 ; *Theol. Ascét.*, I, § 377 ; Farges, *The Ordinary Ways of the Spiritual Life*, p. 94 (English Trans.).

NOTE C

IS THE PRIESTHOOD A STATE OF PERFECTION?

§ 1. The legal notion of 'status' was familiar in Roman Law, as denoting the stable condition of life resulting, e.g. from slavery or citizenship. From Roman Jurisprudence it passed into the Canon Law of the Church, always, of course, with reference not to the internal forum of conscience but to the external legal obligations undertaken in a visible society of human beings. Thus the obligations of the 'married' state differ from those of the 'priestly' state; the 'clerical' state differs from the 'religious' state. The word 'state' is used consistently in this connection throughout the Code. (Cf. Canons 487, 971.) The term 'status perfectionis' is not expressly used in the Code, although its substantial equivalent is found in Canon 593. Following S. Thomas, the authors recognise and take for granted a two-fold state of perfection: 'status perfectionis acquirendæ,' which is the religious state, and 'status perfectionis acquisitæ.' The latter is restricted by S. Thomas to the episcopate. Although he repeatedly insists on the priestly obligation to perfection, and teaches that it is greater than that induced by religious vows, he does not definitely concede that the priesthood is a state of perfection in either of these two senses. In one text, however, he adds the clerical state to these two: 'Perfectio status est duplex' (triplex ?). Primo (Prima ?) ordinis, Deut.

xxxiii, 8, dicitur Levitis ' Perfectio tua et doctrina tua viro sancto tuo.' Secunda prælationis, Luc. vi, 4, ' Perfectus erit omnis si sit sicut magister eius.' Tertia religionis, *infra* xix, 21, ' Si vis perfectus esse, vade, et vende omnia quæ habes, et da pauperibus, etc.' (*Comment. in Matt.*, c., v. Ed. Parma, X, p. 67). Unfortunately the doctrine here is not fully developed. In conceding the first place to Holy Orders the text appears to harmonise with the explicit statement in II–II, 184, 8, which requires greater sanctity in a priest than in a religious. In another text, on the principle that a state of perfection arises from an obligation to practise certain *means* to that end, he teaches that, owing to the vow of chastity assumed with the subdiaconate in the Western Church, a state of perfection is thereby created, though it is not a state of perfection ' simpliciter.' '. . . . per hoc quod aliqui suscipiunt sacrum ordinem, accipiunt potestatem quosdam sacros actus perficiendi : non autem obligantur ex hoc ipso ad ea quæ sunt perfectionis, nisi quatenus apud occidentalem Ecclesiam in susceptione sacri ordinis emittitur continentiæ votum, quod est unum eorum quæ ad perfectionem pertinent, ut infra dicetur ; unde patet quod ex hoc quod aliquis accipit sacrum ordinem, non ponitur simpliciter in statu perfectionis ; quamvis interior perfectio ad hoc requiratur, quod aliquis digne huiusmodi actus exerceat.' (*Summa Theol.*, 2–2, 184, 6.) Similarly the priesthood does not share, according to S. Thomas, in the episcopal ' state of perfection,' ' status perfectionis acquisitæ,' in which the bishop is bound to perfection from his pastoral office in perfecting others. The reason he does not concede this state to the priesthood is the supposition, which may have been true in his day, that priests may, at will, give up the care of souls, either by joining a religious Order, or by accepting a benefice to which the care of souls is not attached. Were S. Thomas living at the present day, when the

majority of the secular clergy are bound by their ordination title to the service of their diocese, as strongly as any religious by his vows, and when the Canon Law does not allow absolute liberty to these clergy of joining religious Orders (Canon 542, 2), his judgement would, perhaps, have been different. (Cf. *La Vie Diocesaine de Malines*, Vol. XIII, p. 402.)

Owing to the great authority of S. Thomas, the view he defended has been adopted by many. It might, perhaps, assist in crystallising the priestly obligation to sanctity of life, especially in the training of young clerics, if it could be taught with certainty that the priesthood is a state of perfection. This position, which is held by numberless authors of the greatest repute, has not been adopted in this book for the following reason : it would confuse the clear and certain doctrine concerning the necessity of priestly sanctity, by introducing a controversial aspect : it would lead some ill-trained minds to conclude that, if there are two points of view regarding the priesthood being a canonical ' state of perfection,' there are also two points of view about the priestly obligation to interior sanctity.

Amongst the many authors who have taught, in express terms, that the priesthood is a state of perfection, are found contemporaries of S. Thomas, as well as later writers, e.g. Gottfried of Fontaines (1293), Quodl. V, q. 16. (*Zeitschrift für Aszese u. Mystik*, 1927, p. 202.) In the following century Gerson held that the parochial clergy were superior to religious in state as well as in their priestly order. (*De Statu Curatorum*, quoted by Ullathorne, *Ecclesiastical Discourses*, p. 141.)

§ 2. Bellarmine writes as follows : ' Tria sunt Ecclesiæ membra præcipua. Primum eorum est, qui in statu perfectionis adeptæ esse dicuntur, qui sunt Episcopi Ecclesiarum principes, et magistri, quibus adjungimus Presbyteros, qui sunt minores sacerdotes, atque eorum

administros. Alterum est eorum qui sunt in statu perfectionis adipiscendæ. . . . Tertium est laicorum.' (*De Gemitu Columbæ*, II, c. 5. Ed. Vivès, Vol. VIII, p. 433.)

§ 3. Suarez, in a very exhaustive discussion of the whole question, summarises the teaching of many theologians who hold the priesthood to be a state of perfection : (*a*) '. . . . ex vi sui ordinis habent proprium vitæ institutum immutabile, et ad excellentissima opera, quæ magnam sanctitatem et perfectionem requirunt, ordinatum ; nimirum ad consecrandum corpus et sanguinem Domini, et ad offerendum Deo divinissimum sacrificium, et ut sacerdos sit mediator inter Deum et populum, nomine totius ecclesiæ pro fidelibus intercedendo. Quæ omnia adeo sunt excellentia, ut si comparetur consecratio Episcopi ad ordinationem sacerdotis, in eo præcise quod unaquæque per se confert, altior videatur sacerdotis ordinatio quam Episcopi consecratio. Ergo ex vi sui ordinis constituitur in statu perfectionis exercendæ. . . .' (*De Statu Religionis*, Lib. I, c. xvii, n. 2. Ed. Vivès, Vol. XV, p. 85.)

(*b*) His own view of the matter is inclined to agree with this doctrine. ' Uterque modus docendi potest facile defendi, quia *dissensio videtur esse magis de modo loquendi quam de re.* Nihilominus tamen negare non possum, quin sacerdotes habeant aliquo modo statum perfectionis, saltem inchoatum, tum quia habent sacrum ministerium valde excellens, ratione cuius ad magnam honestatem et virtutem obligantur, ut docent patres scribentes de sacerdotio, præsertim Chrysostomus et Ambrosius. . . . Et Cajetanus (in 2–2, 184, art. 4) dicit ex hypothesi, quod, si obligatio ad maiorem perfectionem sufficeret ad statum perfectionis, sacerdos ex vi sui ordinis esset in statu perfectionis. Ego autem supra ostendi, sacerdotem non minus obligari ad exteriorem quam ad interiorem virtutem ; et certe in Pontificali Romano . . . externa munera perfectionis tribuunutur

sacerdoti. . . . Quapropter censeo sacerdotes, ex vi sui ordinis, habere statum altiorem et sanctiorem, qui ab eis nonnulla perfectionis opera requirit, ratione cuius obligationis merito dici possunt esse aliquo modo, saltem inchoative, in statu perfectionis.' (*Ib.*, n. 4).

(*c*) When to the priesthood is joined the care of souls, the existence of a state of perfection is all the more evident. ' In quo aliquid considerari potest pertinens ad perfectionem vitæ contemplativæ, et aliquid vitæ activæ, et primum habere ex vi sacræ ordinationis ; secundum autem ex vi prælationis. Nam ratione ministerii consecrandi et offerendi corpus Christi, quod per sacerdotalem ordinationem accipiunt, ad altiorem rerum divinarum considerationem, maioremque animæ puritatem obligantur; ratione vero prælationis tenentur saluti proximorum procurandæ incumbere. Et quia ex vi ordinationis et susceptionis talis muneris ad utraque opera perpetuo dicantur, non incongrue dicuntur esse in statu perfectionis dicto modo, licet gradu inferiori vel infimo illius ordinis, ut explicatum est. Et sane, quamvis D. Thomas, Cajetanus et alii in modo loquendi differeant, in re non discrepant. Nam idemet D. Thomas in Matt. v, in ultimis verbis, distinguens statum perfectionis viæ in tria membra, unum vocat ordinis, alium prælationis, et tertium religionis, significans non solum prælatos omnes sed etiam clericos esse in statu perfectionis. Unde aliqui conciliant illas sententias, dicentes hos prælatos non simpliciter, sed tantum secundum quid esse in statu perfectionis, quod facile potest admitti, nec de vocibus contendendum est. . . .' (*Ib.*, n. 29, p. 92). This teaching of the great Jesuit is very precious, since he is universally regarded as the chief authority on the religious state of perfection.

§ 4. Cardinal Manning in writing *The Pastoral Office*, and throughout his life, defended the thesis, rooted in tradition, that the Priesthood is a State of Perfection.

(See Purcell, *Life*, Vol. II, pp. 761–767, 783–789.) The enthusiasm with which he defended this view, which is quite common in theological schools, had exactly the result we have been most anxious to avoid (p. 183)—he was misunderstood by people unskilled in theology as conferring 'the powers, privileges and character of the Episcopate on the secular clergy.' (*Ib.*, p. 731.)

§ 5. The best modern writers, concerning themselves more with the substance of the question than verbal disputes, commonly teach quite simply that the priesthood is a state of perfection. 'Ce bel enseignement (i.e. II–II, 184, 8) . . . a été condensé dans cette formule : le religieux laique est dans un état où il doit acquérir la perfection (in statu perfectionis acquirendæ), le prêtre, lui, est dans une situation où il doit l'avoir déjà acquise (in statu perfectionis acquisitæ). (Pourrat, *La Spiritualité Chrétienne*, II, Ch. V, p. 210.) 'Comme les curés ont, eux aussi, charge d'âmes, et sont attachés à une portion déterminée de l'Église, on peut dire, par analogie avec l'épiscopat, qu'ils sont dans un état de perfection.' (Vacant et Mangenot, *Dict. Theol.*, V, col. 907. Cf. IV, 684.)

NOTE D

SOME NOVEL VIEWS CONCERNING SECULAR CLERGY

§ 1. SOME writers on Moral Theology, especially those belonging to the Gury-Ballerini family, often seem to go out of their way to obscure the obligation to perfection assumed with the priesthood. Gury-Ballerini, Ed. 1901, Vol. I, § 988, n. 1, explains S. Thomas as follows: 'Comparat hoc loco S. Thomas (II–II, 184, 8) sacerdotem cum Religioso laico, et mere contendit, sacerdotem quoad *dignitatem* ob præeminentiam ordinis religioso laico præcellere.' S. Thomas is clearly speaking of 'sanctitas interior,' not of 'dignitas,' as any novice in the Latin tongue can read. As a result of this singular reading of the text the same manual contains the equally erroneous statement 'Status sacerdotalis licet dignitate omnium præstantissimus sit, ratione tamen perfectionis longe vitæ religiosæ cedit' (*Ib.*, § 1086). 'In my belief,' says Cardinal Manning, 'that proposition is erroneous and offensive to pious ears, and injurious to our Divine Master and to the Holy Ghost' (Purcell, op. cit., II, p. 764). 'If Gury means that the state of a faithful priest *perfectione longe cedit* to the state of a Jesuit lay-brother, I think it deserves all censures below heresy' (*Ib.*, p. 765). The widely used post-Codex manual of Ferreres retains the second text but wisely omits Gury's commentary on II–II, 184, 8, of the Summa. Without following the

Cardinal in assigning censures to such propositions, they are evidently false, and, if offered for the instruction of young and inexperienced clerical students, are distinctly dangerous and misleading.

§ 2. There is a small work by Louis Sempé, S.J. (Toulouse 1925), entitled *Le Clergé Séculier et l'État Religieux*, which records in print exactly the kind of misconceptions concerning the secular clergy mentioned above (p. 191). It is in the form of a dialogue, like the great work of S. John Chrysostom on the Priesthood. The questioner is apparently labouring under very gross ignorance of the functions appropriate to the religious state, and the author feels obliged to dispel this ignorance by answers which are more disturbing than the objections. He traces the origin of the secular clergy to the eleventh century: 'l'époque où le clergé paroissial, qui depuis longtemps avait été ramené a l'état religieux dans lequel l'avaient établi les apôtres, commença à se sécullariser. . . .' (p. 4). The present condition of the secular clergy (i.e. not living the religious life) was not their primitive condition. The Church has always desired the clergy to be religious: 'L'Église l'a toujours voulu . . . seulement, les circonstances ne lui ont pas toujours permis de le réaliser . . .' (p. 24). The author quotes the ordinary law of the Church requiring the clergy to live in community, wherever possible, and sees in this the first beginnings of the return of the truant secular clergy to the happiness of religious Orders, with the vow of poverty and obedience to a superior, choral liturgy, etc. etc. (p. 37). He approves of the view which regards the widespread insistence to-day on the perfection of the priestly and pastoral office as due to three things: (i) Une nostalgie inconsciente de la vie religieuse. Car s'ils cherchent des subtilités pour declarer l'état séculier état de perfection, ce n'est pas préjugé, c'est qu'ils ne se resignent pas à se passer d'un idéal que leur piété appelle ;

(ii) une ignorance de l'histoire ; (iii) une illusion ascétique (p. 39).

The answer to such a curious outlook is found in Chapter IX *supra* (cf. also O'Carroll, *Vocazione Religiosa o Ecclesiastica*, Venice, 1928). If, at times, the doctrine is expressed with some insistence it will be excused in view of such statements as the above. Any secular priest suffering from ' nostalgie ' for the religious life can join a religious Order, provided he is not forbidden by Canon 542, 2, or by a previous oath imposed by the Church (cf. p. 180). The historical origin of the term ' secular clergy ' is plainly described by Bishop Ullathorne, O.S.B. : ' In the Middle Ages after the sacerdotal order began to be systematically united with the religious state, and men under religious rule were called to a great mission in the Church, and even at times to the pastoral care, by way of distinguishing the one class of priests from the other, the term secular, which had heretofore been limited to the laity, became attached to the diocesan clergy.' (*Ecclesiastical Discourses*, p. 130.) If the obligation to perfection assumed with the priesthood, as such, is an ' illusion ascétique,' it is an illusion which began with the foundation of the priesthood by Christ and has been jealously preserved in the Church ever since. ' The whole Episcopate and the whole priesthood in all the world and from the beginning has been without vows. Therefore of two things, one—(1) Either it was instituted without vows by our Divine Lord ; or (2) It has universally, everywhere and always, departed from his will. Such a proposition I believe to be offensive to pious ears ; scandalous, injurious to the Holy See, erroneous, contrary to the doctrine of the passive and active infallibility of the Church, and therefore materially heretical.' Thus Cardinal Manning (Purcell, II, p. 765). I should be content with one of these censures : ' erroneous.' One need not refer to the author's apparent

forgetfulness of the fluctuating history of nearly all religious Orders in the past. No country was so populated with monasteries and religious houses as England at the time of the Reformation, and many fair ruins still bear them witness. Of what kind were their inmates? 'I will answer, with Cardinal Pole, that the monks of the period were men of little reputation . . . degenerated from the spirit of their original institute. The only exceptions which he allows are in favour of the Brigittines, a single house, the Carthusians and Observantines, the least numerous of the Orders.' (Lingard, *Life and Letters*, p. 184.) Is there any guarantee that, if the secular clergy all became religious, the essential work of the priesthood among the masses would be improved? The author sees in the terms of Canon 134 the desire of the Church that all priests should return to a primitive discipline, which, in a few places, required the diocesan clergy to live the religious life in the house of their bishop. S. Augustine certainly employed this system. But Canon 134 is not speaking of the religious life but of the excellent custom of parochial clergy living together in a presbytery, a custom which exists universally in this country. The custom is to be preserved *quantum fieri potest*, for it is evident that if the parochial clergy were under a rule always to cling together in communities, many places would lack the services of a priest. There is some confusion in citing this canon at all. If it is community life that makes a man a religious, then the clergy of Westminster Cathedral are religious and a monk of Downside or Ampleforth, in charge of a parish miles from his monastery, is not.

§ 3. A contributor to the *Dictionnarie Apologétique* (Raoul Plus, S.J., s.v. Vocation, p. 1900 *seq.*) compares the secular clergy to religious. On the question of *fact* he forms a generous estimate of the secular priest 'aussi pauvre parfois et peût-etre plus, en fait, que le religieux

. . . munis d'une science de premier ordre . . . comme des œuvres de haute valeur en témoignent tous les jours.' He recognises, of course, that the hierarchy of the Church traces its origin to Christ's institution ; that the secular clergy are, as it were, the infantry who are assisted by other formations, i.e. the religious Orders. ' Les deux fondations se soutiennent, se complètent, et dans une large mesure se confondent.'

But, in discussing the *theory* of priestly perfection, the writer has failed to perceive the principle whence arises the priest's obligation to interior personal sanctity (cf. p. 173 *supra*). The result is an inconsistency of statement which is extremely difficult to understand. ' Mais requérir une très haute perfection, voire une sainteté intérieure plus grande que celle du religieux non-prêtre, n'exige pas que le sujet s'engage, au moins par profession formelle, à tendre à la perfection.' How can this be true ? The priesthood, he says, demands a higher degree of sanctity than the religious life, but it does not demand that a priest should tend towards that sanctity ! Clearly, if a given state of life requires certain qualities, the person in that state is bound to tend towards their acquisition. Perhaps the solution of this riddle is found in the words ' au moins par profession formelle ' ? If by ' formal profession ' he means religious vows, certainly the secular priest is not bound to use those means any more than the episcopate, for they are not necessary means (cf. p. 149 *supra*). What, however, does a secular priest formally profess ? He professes a participation in the Priesthood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ; he professes to imitate what he handles (imitamini quod tractatis) ; he professes to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth ; he professes to be the ambassador of Christ, the dispenser of the mysteries of God. ' Ordines sacri præexigunt sanctitatem : sed status religiosus est exercitium quoddam ad sanctitatem

assequendam' (II–II, 189, 1, *ad* 3). If such a dread profession (cum magno timore ad tantum gradum ascendendum est) does not solemnly engage him to perfect his soul, what does it do for him? 'Qu'est ce que demande l'Église du candidat au sacerdoce? D'être apte à exercer les fonctions du culte. Rigoureusement, c'est tout.' One quotation from Pius X will dispel this dangerous fallacy. 'Equidem sunt qui putant, quin etiam profitentur, sacerdotis laudem in eo collocandum omnino esse, ut sese aliorum utilitatibus totum impendant. . . . Hæc sana doctrina mirum quamtum fallaciæ habet atque exitii. . . . Sanctitas una nos efficit, quales vocatio divina exposcit.' (*Haerent Animo*, cf. p. 162 *supra*). What is the fallacy? It is in supposing that a priest can rightly exercise his sacred functions unless he is endowed with a high degree of sanctity.

§ 4. Fr. A. Vermeersch, S.J. (*Religious and Ecclesiastical Vocation*, Eng. Tr., Herder 1925), in comparing the religious with the priestly state, appears also not to have fully appreciated the obligation to sanctity assumed with the priesthood. 'The sacerdotal state as such confers on the individual the noblest office and duties which, if they be well performed, imply a practice of charity that is very useful for promoting the pursuit of sanctity. But this state does not directly give one a special aptitude for acquiring perfection' (p. 65). 'But what of the secular priests? There can be no doubt that, even apart from their sublime dignity, they are in a state which far surpasses that of the laity . . . there will always be very many who will shrink from the additional self-denial demanded by the poverty and obedience required in the religious state. . . . The confessor speaking in the name of Christ must express the sentiments of Christ. Therefore he must beware of persuading individuals to join the secular clergy, or of concealing the better things in such a manner that individuals are

turned away from the religious state' (pp. 71, 72). The learned author appears to be unaware of the fact that men of the greatest generosity and self-denial can, for that reason, be attracted to the diocesan clergy. It would be equally true to say that many seek the priesthood in a religious Order because they shrink from the arduous, self-denying and obscure life of a secular priest. The author concedes that the priestly state surpasses that of the laity, but he does not insist on the doctrine of S. Thomas, which is the traditional doctrine of the Church, that greater interior sanctity is required in the priesthood than in the religious life. The sacred office of the confessor is regulated and safeguarded by innumerable rules imposed by the Church or suggested by theological writers. Fr. Vermeersch has invented a new one. The confessor must beware of persuading people to join the secular clergy! Moral theologians are accustomed, in every school of theology, to having their little joke. The kindest way of regarding this extraordinary doctrine is to treat it as a joke, out of place, indeed, in such a context, but clearly not to be taken seriously. Whether meant to be humorous or not, it has caused much innocent amusement to numbers of the clergy.

FINIS

INDEX

Aaron, 56, 80
Alphonsus, S., 60, 91, 165
Aquinas, Thomas, S., 6, 9, 28, 84, 94, 146, 149, 153, 158, 164, 172, 174, 176, 180, 223, 227

Badin, Fr., 159
Bellarmine, 229
Benson, Mgr., 197
Bernardine of Siena, S., 68
Booth, Ch., 183
Bourne, Cardinal, v, 187, 225
Butler, Abbot, 188

Camm, Dom Bede, 198
Canonisations, 195
Catherine of Siena, S., 1
Celibacy *v.* Chastity
Charity, 90, 94, 109, 140, 147
Chastity, 52, 91, 106, 178
Chaucer, 48, 137
Christ, Prayer of, 40
  Priesthood, 1
  Sacrifice, 3, 7, 55
Church Students :
  Cost of education, 127
  Perseverance, 127
  Rejection, 81, 86, 132
  Seminary training, q.v.
  Vocation, q.v.
Clement, S., 18, 27
Codex Juris Canonici :
  111, 36
  124, 159
  125, 159
  134, 159
  487, 173, 227
  542, 229
  593, 227
  886, 75
  956, 37
  969, 75, 78
  971, 71, 73, 227
  973, 29, 71
  984, 23
  985, 23
  987, 23
  1043, 178
  1353, 59, 67, 106, 221
  1357, 58, 59, 67, 221
  1360, 128
  1363, 78
  1367, 128
  1371, 96, 128
  1471, 140
  2352, 71
Contemplative Life, 149
Convert Clergymen, 117
Counsels of Perfection, 149
Curé d'Ars, 95, 150, 186

Diaconate, 27, 35, 155

Episcopate :
Distinct from Priesthood, 24, 26
In Apostolic times, 24
Separate Sacrament, 36
State of Perfection, 159
Eucharist, Holy, 10, 18

Faith, 129
Ferreres, 233
Florence, Council of, 33
Francis de Sales, S., 89, 129, 147

Génicot, 72
Gerson, 229
Grabmann, 226
Gregory the Great, S., 163
Gury, 233

Hebrews, Epistle to, 5
Hedley, Bishop, 97, 165, 225
Hippolytus, Canons of, 63

Incardination, 36
Intention *re* Priesthood, 87, 109
Irregularity, 23, 78

Jerome, S., 176, 190
John Chrysostom, S., 163
Jowett, Dr., 62, 100

Knowledge required for Priesthood, 94, 113, 128, 132 ; *v.* Seminary : Mental training

Lahitton, 83, 220
Leo XIII, 161
Lester, Fr., 117
Lingard, 236

Manning, Cardinal, 166, 170, 194, 225, 231, 233, 235
Mary, B.V., 22, 120
Mercier, Cardinal, 166, 194, 225
Minor Orders, 28
Mission Oath, 180
Mulders, A., 221

Obedience, 50, 92, 130, 179
Office, Divine, 39
Olier, 175
Orders, Holy, Sacrament of :
Anglican Orders, 38
Diaconate, q.v.
Episcopate, q.v.
Essential rite, 32
Institution, 30, 35
Matter and Form, 33
Minor Orders, q.v.
Priesthood, q.v.
Proper Bishop, 37
Rite of, 37, 199
Title, q.v.
Orders, Religious : 145
Pastoral office, 187
Relation to Episcopate, 189, 192
Secular Clergy compared with, *v.* Secular Clergy ; Sanctity obligatory on the Priesthood
Vocation, q.v.

Pastoral office, 44, 179
Penance, Sacrament of, 41

Perseverance, 93
Pius X, 162, 220, 238
Pius XI, 161
Plus, Raoul Fr., 236
Pole, Cardinal, 123, 236
Pourrat, 225, 232
Poverty, 181, 226
Prayer, 40, 119, 142
Preaching, 43
Perfection :
  Counsels of, 149
  Nature of, 90, 146
  Obligation on the Priesthood, *v.* Sanctity
  State of, q.v.
Priesthood :
  All Christians, 20
  Candidates for, *v.* Church Students, Vocation
  Character of, 14
  Christ High-Priest, 1
  Christian Priesthood, 10
  Distinct from laity, 17
  Rite of conferring, 157, 199
  Sanctity obligatory, q.v.
  Secular Clergy, q.v.
  Women, 21

Sacraments, 29, 31, 41
Sacrifice, 4, 55
Sanctity obligatory on the Priesthood, 144, 151, 152, 153
  Candidates for the Priesthood, 90, 109
  Laws of the Church, 158
  Papal pronouncements, 161
  Patristic teaching, 223
  Pontifical, 154
  Religious vows, comparison with, 144, 167, 169, 233
  State of Perfection, q.v.
  Theological teaching, 163, 223
Secular Clergy :
  Canonised saints, 195
  Ideals of, 184, 188, 190
  Life of, 53, *v.* Pastoral office
  Meaning of the term, 172, 185, 194
  Misconceptions concerning, 185, 191, 194, 233
  Training of, *v.* Seminary ; Church Students
Seminary :
  Apostles with Christ, comparison, 124
  Constitution, 103
  Importance of, 122
  Life in, 139
  Mental training, 128, 132, *v.* Knowledge required for Priesthood
  Obedience, 80, 130
  Spiritual training, 128, 136
Sempé, Fr., 234
State of Perfection, 159, 172, 177, 227
Suarez, 184, 230
Subdiaconate, 71, 155

Thomas, S., *v.* Aquinas
Title of Ordination, 52, 180
Tonsure, 28
Trent, Catechism of the Council of, 78
Trent, Council of, 10, 12, 24, 64, 75, 77, 123, 124, 159, 163
Tronson, 163

Ullathorne, Bishop, 148, 226, 235

Vaughan, Cardinal, 120, 122, 167, 238
Vocation to the Priesthood :
Beginnings of, 67
Call of the Church, 62, 73
Call of God, 56, 64, 68
Confessor's office, 74, 84
Defined, 61
Fostering, 102
Inspiration of God, 76, 83, 97, 221
Jowett, Dr., 62
Lahitton, q.v.
Late, 114, *v.* Convert Clergymen
Liturgical influence, 113
Obligation of accepting, 71
Parental influence, 108
Prayer for, 119
Preventing, 72, 106
Priest's influence, 111
Providence of God, 64, 104
Signs of, 60, 66, 86, *v.* Intention, Knowledge, Sanctity
Term explained, 58, 60
Vocation, religious, 59

Ward, Bishop, 225
Westminster, IVth Prov. Council, 160
Wiseman, Cardinal, 182
Women and Priesthood, 21

obedience 92
stability 93
(p 172) charity 94 12-fold)
tonsure rite

edegnak intellectual knowledge 94

Lexicon Bibliorum : Hebrij